PARTISAN REVIEW

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TILLIE LERNER, arrested during the raids in San Francisco, has been recently released on bail, and is now completing a novel, part of which appeared in the April-May issue of *Partisan Review*. This fragment was singled out by Robert Cantwell as "a work of early genius" in a review of little magazines in the *New Republic*. . . . LOUIS ARAGON, author of *The Red Front*, is considered to be the leading French revolutionary poet. . . . MURRELL EDMUNDS is the author of *Earthenware*, a volume of short stories. He lives in New Orleans, La. . . . EDWIN ROLFE (member of the J.R.C. of New York) is on the editorial staff of the *Daily Worker*. . . . RAMON FERNANDEZ is one of the foremost critics on the Continent. Until recently a humanist,his turn to the Left at the time of the February riots in France illustrates the rapid radicalization of French intellectuals. *Messages*, a volume of his criticism, appeared in English some yars ago. *I Came Near Being a Fascist* was originally published in *Commune*, organ of the Union of Revolutionary Writers in France. . . . NELSON ALGREN (member of the J.R.C. of Chicago) is the author of a forthcoming novel, *Somebody in Boots*, to be published by Vanguard. . . . ALFRED HAYES (member of the J.R.C. of New York) is a regular contributor to *Partisan Review*. . . . ISIDOR SCHNEIDER, author of *The Temptation of Anthony*, will publish a volume of revolutionary poetry this fall. . . . PHILIP RAHV (member of the J.R.C. of New York) is a regular contributor of literary criticism to revolutionary publications. . . . J. S. BALCH (member of the J.R.C. of St. Louis) has worked as seaman, gravedigger in "an exclusive cemetery," printer, shipping clerk, and boxer. . . . KENNETH FEARING (member of the J.R.C. of New York) is the author of *Angel Arms*, a volume of verse. . . . WALLACE PHELPS (member of the J.R.C. of New York) is working on a book of literary criticism. . . . GERTRUDE DIAMANT is a novelist and short story writer. . . . MILLEN BRAND is a newcomer to revolutionary publications. He lives in New York City. . . . WILLIAM ROLLINS, JR. is the author of *The Shadow Before*, a revolutionary novel which has received wide and merited accalim. . . . ALAN CALMER is national secretary of the John Reed Clubs.

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THE STRIKE

Tillie Lerner

DO NOT ASK ME TO WRITE of the strike and the terror. I am on a battlefield, and the increasing stench and smoke sting the eyes so it is impossible to turn them back into the past. You leave me only this night to drop the bloody garment of Todays, to cleave through the gigantic events that have crashed one upon the other, to the first beginning. If I could go away for a while, if there were time and quiet, perhaps I could do it. All that has happened might resolve into order and sequence, fall into neat patterns of words. I could stumble back into the past and slowly, painfully rear the structure in all its towering magnificence, so that the beauty and heroism, the terror and significance of those days, would enter your heart and sear it forever with the vision.

But I hunch over the typewriter and behind the smoke, the days whirl, confused as dreams. Incidents leap out like a thunder and are gone. There flares the remembrance of that night in early May, in Stockton, when I walked down the road with the paper in my hands and the streaming headlines, LONGSHOREMEN OUT. RIOT EXPECTED; LONGSHORE STRIKE DECLARED. And standing there in the yellow stubble I remembered Jerry telling me quietly, " . . . for 12 years now. But we're through sweating blood, loading cargo five times the weight we should carry, we're through standing morning after morning like slaves in a slave market begging for a bidder. We'll be out, you'll see; it may be a few weeks, a few months, but WE'LL BE OUT, and then hell can't stop us."

H-E-L-L C-A-N-T S-T-O-P U-S. Days, pregnant days, spelling out the words. The port dead but for the rat stirring of a few scabs at night, the port paralyzed, gummed on one side by the thickening scum of prostrate ships, islanded on the other by the river of pickets streaming ceaselessly up and down, a river that sometimes raged into a flood, surging over the wavering shoreline of police, battering into the piers and sucking under the scabs in its angry tides. HELL CAN'T STOP US. That was the meaning of the lines of women and children marching up Market

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with their banners—"This is our fight, and we're with the men to the finish." That was the meaning of the seamen and the oilers and the wipers and the mastermates and the pilots and the scalers torrenting into the river, widening into the sea.

The kids coming in from the waterfront. The flame in their eyes, the feeling of invincibility singing in their blood. The stories they had to tell of scabs educated, of bloody skirmishes. My heart was ballooning with happiness anyhow, to be back, working in the movement again, but the things happening down at the waterfront, the heroic everydays, stored such richness in me I can never lose it. The feeling of sympathy widening over the city, of quickening—class lines sharpening. I armored myself with that on National Youth Day hearing the smash and thud of clubs around me, seeing boys fall to their knees in streams of blood, pioneer kids trampled under by horses. . . .

There was a night that was the climax of those first days—when the workers of San Francisco packed into the Auditorium to fling a warning to the shipowners. There are things one holds like glow in the breast, like a fire; they make the unseen warmth that keeps one through the cold of defeat, the hunger of despair. That night was one—symbol and portent of what will be. We League kids came to the meeing in a group, and walking up the stairs we felt ourselves a flame, a force. At the door bulls were standing, with menacing faces. but behind them fear was blanching—the people massing in, they had never dreamed it possible—people coming in and filling the aisles, packing the back. Spurts of song flaming up from downstairs, answered by us, echoed across the gallery, solidarity weaving us all into one being. 20,000 jammed in and the dim blue ring of cops back in the hall was wavering, was stretching itself thin and unseeable. It was OUR auditorium, we had taken it over. And for blocks around they hear OUR voice. The thunder of our applause, the mighty roar of it for Bridges, for Caves, for Schumacher. "Thats no lie." "Tell them Harry" "To the Finish" "We're with you" "Attaboy" "We're solid." The speeches, "They can never load their ships with tear gas and guns," "For years we were nothing but nameless beasts of burden to them, but now. . . . " "Even if it means . . . GENERAL STRIKE," the voices rising, lifted on a sea of affection, vibrating in 20,000 hearts.

There was the moment—the first bruise in the hearts of our masters—when Mayor Rossi entered, padding himself from the fists of boos smashing around him with 60 heavyfoots, and bulls, and honoraries. The boos

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had filled into breasts feeling and seeing the tattoo of his clubs on the embarcadero, and Rossi hearing tried to lose himself into his topcoat, failing, tried to puff himself invincible with the majesty of his office. "Remember, I am your chief executive, the respect . . . the honor . . . due that office . . . don't listen to me then but listen to your mayor . . . listen," and the boos rolled over him again and again so that the reptile voice smothered, stopped. He never forgot the moment he called for law and order, charging the meeting with not caring to settle by peaceful means, wanting only violence, and voices ripped from every corner. "Who started the violence?" "Who calls the bulls to the waterfront?" "Who ordered the clubbing?"—and in a torrent of anger shouted, "Shut up, we have to put up with your clubs but not with your words, get out of here, GET OUT OF HERE." That memory clamped into his heart, into the hearts of those who command him, that bruise becames the cancer of fear that flowered into the monstrous Bloody Thursday, that opened into the pus of Terror—but the cancer grows, grows; there is no cure. . . .

It was after that night he formed his "Citizens Committee," after that night the still smiling lips of the Industrial Association bared into a growl of open hatred, exposing the naked teeth of guns and tear gas. The tempo of those days maddened to a crescendo. The city became a camp, a battlefield, the screams of ambulances sent the day reeling, class lines fell sharply—everywhere, on streetcars, on corners, in stores, pople talked, cursing, stirred with something strange in their breasts, incomprehensible, shaken with fury at the police, the papers, the shipowners . . . going down to the waterfront, not curious spectators, but to stand there, watching, silent, trying to read the lesson the moving bodies underneath were writing, trying to grope to the meaning of it all, police "protecting lives" smashing clubs and gas bombs into masses of men like themselves, papers screaming lies. Those were the days when with every attack on the picket lines the phone rang at the I.L.A.—"NOW—will you arbitrate?"—when the mutter GENERAL STRIKE swelled to a thunder, when everywhere the cry arose—"WE'VE GOT TO END IT NOW." Coming down to headquarters from the waterfront, the faces of comrades had the strained look of men in battle, that strangely intense look of living, of feeling too much in too brief a space of time. . . .

Yes, those were the days crescendoing—and the typewriter breaks, stops for an instant—to Bloody Thursday. Weeks afterward my fists clench at the remembrance and the hate congests so I feel I will burst. Bloody Thursday—our day we write on the pages of history with letters

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of blood and hate. Our day we fling like a banner to march with the other bloody days when guns spat death at us that a few dollars might be saved to fat bellies, when lead battered into us, and only our naked hands, the fists of our bodies moving together could resist. Drown their strength in blood, they commanded, but instead they armored us in inflexible steel—hate that will never forget. . . .

"It was as close to war . . . as actual war could be," the papers blared triumphantly, but Bridges told them, "not war . . . MASSACRE, armed forces massacreing unarmed." Words I read through tears of anger so that they writhed and came alive like snakes, you rear in me again, "and once again the policemen, finding their gas bombs and gas shells ineffective poured lead from their revolvers into the jammed streets. Men (MEN) fell right and left." " . . . And everywhere was the sight of men, beaten to their knees to lie in a pool of blood." "Swiftly, from intersection to intersection the battle moved, stubbornly the rioters refused to fall back so that the police were forced. . . ." "and the police shot forty rounds of tear gas bombs into the mob before it would move. . . . "

Law . . . and order . . . will . . . prevail. Do you hear? It's war, WAR—and up and down the street "A man clutched at his leg and fell to the sidewalk" "The loud shot like that of the tear gas bombs zoomed again, but no blue smoke this time, and when the men cleared, two bodies lay on the sidewalk, their blood trickling about them."—overhead an airplane lowered, dipped, and nausea gas swooned down in a cloud of torture, and where they ran from street to street, resisting stubbornly, massing again, falling back only to carry the wounded, the thought tore frenziedly through the mind, war, war, it's WAR—and the lists in the papers, the dead, the wounded by bullets, the wounded by other means—W-A-R.

LAW—you hear, Howard Sperry, exserviceman, striking stevedore, shot in the back and abdomen, said to be in dying condition, DEAD, LAW AND ORDER—you hear and remember this Ben Martella, shot in arm, face and chest, Joseph Beovich, stevedore, laceration of skull from clubbing and broken shoulder, Edwin Hodges, Jerry Hart, Leslie Steinhart, Steve Hamrock, Albert Simmons, marine engineer, striking seamen, scaler, innocent bystander, shot in leg, shot in shoulder, chest lacerated by tear gas shell, gassed in eyes, compound skull fracture by clubbing, you hear—LAW AND ORDER MUST PREVAIL—it's all right Nick, clutching your leg and seeing through the fog of pain it is a police car has picked you up, snarling, let me out, I don't want any bastard

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bulls around, and flinging yourself out into the street, still lying there in the hospital today—

LAW AND ORDER—people, watching with horror, trying to comprehend the lesson the moving bodies were writing. The man stopping me on the corner, seeing my angry tears as I read the paper, "Listen," he said, and he talked because he had to talk, because in an hour all the beliefs of his life had been riddled and torn away—"Listen, I was down there, on the waterfront, do you know what they're doing—they were shooting SHOOTING—" and that word came out anguished and separate, "shooting right into men, human beings, they were shooting into them as if they were animals, as if they were targets, just lifting their guns and shooting. I saw this, can you believe it, CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? . . . as if they were targets as if . . . CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?" and he went to the next man and started it all over again. . . .

I was not down . . . by the battlefield. My eyes are anguished from the pictures I pieced together from words of comrades, of strikers, from the pictures filling the newspapers. I sat up in headquarters, racked by the howls of ambulances hurtling by, feeling it incredible the fingers like separate little animals hopping nimbly from key to key, the ordered steady click of the typewriter, feeling any moment the walls would crash and all the madness surge in. Ambulances, ripping out of nowhere, fading; police sirens, outside the sky a ghastly gray, corpse gray, an enormous dead eyelid shutting down on the world. And someone comes in, words lurch out of his mouth, the skeleton is told, and goes again. . . . And I sit there, making a metallic little pattern of sound in the air, because that is all I can do, because that is what I am supposed to do.

They called the guard out . . . "admitting their inability to control the situation," and Barrows boasted, "my men will not use clubs or gas, they will talk with bayonets" . . . Middlestaedt . . . "Shoot to kill. Any man firing into the air will be courtmartialed." With two baby tanks, and machine guns, and howitzers, they went down to the waterfront to take it over, to "protect the interests of the people."

I walked down Market that night. The savage wind lashed at my hair. All life seemed blown out of the street; the few people hurrying by looked hunted, tense, expectant of anything. Cars moved past as if fleeing. And a light, indescribably green and ominous was cast over everything, in great shifting shadows. And down the street the trucks rumbled. Drab colored, with boys sitting on them like corpses sitting and not moving, holding guns stiffly, staring with wide frightened eyes, carried

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down to the Ferry building, down to the Embarcadero to sell out their brothers and fathers for $2.00 a day. Somebody said behind me, and I do not even know if the voice was my own, or unspoken, or imagined, "Go on down there, you sonovabitches, it doesn't matter. It doesn't stop us. We won't forget what happened today. . . . Go on, nothing can stop us . . . now."

Somehow I am down on Stuart and Mission, somehow I am staring at flowers scattered in a border over a space of sidewalk, at stains that look like rust, at an unsteady chalking—"Police Murder. Two Shot in the Back," and looking up I see faces, seen before, but utterly changed, transformed by some inner emotion to faces of steel. "Nick Bordoise . . . and Sperry, on the way to punch his strike card, shot in the back by those bastard bulls. . . . "

OUR BROTHERS

> Howard S. Sperry, a longshoreman, a war vet, a real MAN. On strike since May 9th, 1934 for the right to earn a decent living under decent conditions. . . .
> Nickolas Bordoise, a member of Cooks & Waiters Union for ten years. Also a member of the International Labor Defense. Not a striker, but a worker looking to the welfare of his fellow workers on strike. . . .

Some of what the leaflet said. But what can be said of Howard Sperry, exserviceman, struggling through the horrors of war for his country, remembering the dead men and the nearly dead men lashing about blindly on the battlefield, who came home to die in a new war, a war he had not known existed. What can be said of Nick Bordoise. Communist Party member, who without thanks or request came daily to the embarcadero to sell his fellow workers hot soup to warm their bellies. There was a voice that gave the story of his life, there in the yellowness of the parched grass, with the gravestones icy and strange in the sun; quietly, as if it had risen up from the submerged hearts of the world, as if it had been forever and would be forever, the voice surged over our bowed heads. And the story was the story of any worker's life, of the thousand small deprivations and frustrations suffered, of the courage forged out of the cold and darkness of poverty, of the determination welded out of the helpless anger scalding the heart, the plodding hours of labor and weariness, of the life, given simply, as it had lived, that

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the things which he had suffered should not be, must not be. . . .

There were only a few hundred of us who heard that voice, but the thousands who watched the trucks in the funeral procession piled high with 50c and $1.00 wreaths guessed, and understood. I saw the people, I saw the look on their faces. And it is the look that will be there the days of the revolution. I saw the fists clenched till knuckles were white, and people standing, staring, saying nothing, letting it clamp into their hearts, hurt them so the scar would be there forever—a swelling that would never let them lull.

"Life," the capitalist papers marvelled again, "Life stopped and stared." Yes, you stared, our cheap executive, Rossi—hiding behind the curtains, the cancer of fear in your breast gnawing, gnawing; you stared, members of the Industrial Association, incredulous, where did the people come from, where was San Francisco hiding them, in what factories, what docks, what are they doing there, marching, or standing and watching, not saying anything, just watching. . . . What did it mean, and you dicks, fleeing, hiding behind store windows. . . .

There was a pregnant woman standing on a corner, outlined against the sky, and she might have been a marble, rigid, eternal, expressing some vast and nameless sorrow. But her face was a flame, and I heard her say after a while dispassionately, as if it had been said so many times no accent was needed, "We'll not forget that. We'll pay it back . . . someday." And on every square of sidewalk a man was saying, "We'll have it. We'll have a General Strike. And there won't be processions to bury their dead." "Murder—to save themselves paying a few pennies more wages, remember that Johnny . . . We'll get even. It won't be long. General Strike."

Listen, it is late, I am feverish and tired. Forgive me that the words are feverish and blurred. You see, If I had time, If I could go away. But I write this on a battlefield.

The rest, the General Strike, the terror, arrests and jail, the songs in the night, must be written some other time, must be written later. . . . But there is so much happening now. . . .

August 13, 1934

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FEBRUARY

The strongarm guys the customhouse flunkies the saps
the bookies the old army boys
the popular barytones the pimps the gumshoes
the whores and the he-whores the princes the J.P.s
the distinguished service medals the whorehouse-keepers the landladies
the copper in overalls and the copper in a sacksuit
the fleur de lys the diamond stomacher and the old feedbag
the chippy the old fool and the doublecrosser
the beauty of Auteuil the bitch of the boulevards and the bluebook rabble
the stoolpigeon the patriot the hot mamma
the manufacturer the boy scout the dope-runner
the municipal councillor and the general in the bosom of his family

go trailing a tricolored flag

The pimp's on his uppers now
You don't know how to play the market any more
it's bull it or bear it you lose
Montmartre is empty
and the ponies come high at Maisons-Laffitte
The winter resorts are desolation itself
There's no one left
but the bastard of a snitch
What's more
The South Americans are scarce along the Coast
The Diplomatic Service is plugged up
And there's no longer a living in marriage
France
wake up

Let's trail the tricolored flag

Paris the Paris of Weber and the Horse Show

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the Paris of the Little White Beds and the Charity Bazaar
the Paris of Lalique and of Cartier Chic Paris
the Paris of All Paris the Paris of the Chabanais
the Paris of the Vie Parisienne the real Paris
gay Paree Paris-Plage Paris-Mutuel
Singing Paris Paris by Night
the Casino of Paris the Garden of Paris
Paris Follies Paris Caresses Paris Dreams
The Galeries Parisiennes the Nine out of Ten
Parisians
The real Paris article Paris Madame

goes trailing its tricolored flag

Paris spits a pink fire to Fascism's shimmy
An autobus flames here and there
From the open news-stands flows the black blood of print
Drab ambulances
run a screaming border round the crazy crowd
Old men waving their arms at streetcorners
white beards of heroism
Diamonds lean from the windows of Rolls-Royces
In the disembowelled shopwindows
novelty gloves are kidnaping shoes
Nice weather we're having I'll wager
an evening like this
ought to be good for the high class trade
A boost for the fashion business Come on

trail your tricolored flag

Ah it's our old Paris our wartime Paris
singing the Madelon and wearing
the policeman's cap The coppers
they're all right
The coppers
are with us
The coppers were killed in the war you know
like anybody else
The coppers

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are the Frenchman's ideal
the depositaries
of the French virtues Frank speech and Franked gold
Ah look at them strut will you Hey
better watch where

you're trailing your tricolored flag

But
what is it knives the town in two
what is that train hurtling through
the great patriotic brothel
like a terrible bow over a violin
What is
that red streak that fresh fire that uproar
from the Châtelet to the Etoile
that blow of a fist
straight to the heart of a night-life party
that discordant sound
rising from the depths of the suburbs
and burying the hysteric strains of the Marseillaise
What is that flame at the head of the procession
that flame which pales your tiny fires
now that all fires are suddenly but the glow
of the red flag
The Soviets-Everywhere-the-Soviets-Everywhere
The Soviets-Everywhere

In the mud with the tricolored flag

LOUIS ARAGON
(*From the French by Samuel Putnam*)

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PRELUDE

Murrell Edmunds

As soon as he came into the house, I knew he had done it. I knew his mind was made up. My heart near stopped beating. His face was all lit-up and shining and he didn't look worried no more, and everything he done was kind of free and easy, like somebody had done lifted a heavy burden from off his chest.

I hadn't even took off my clothes, I had been setting there in front of the stove all night long waiting for him, and the sight of his face skeered me a little. So I says, "Son, here 'tis almost morning, and you didn't come home for your supper again tonight. I don't know what's got into you lately, never coming to your meals and staying out half the night with God knows what sort of people."

Now he ain't had a job for six months, but he says, "I been busy here lately, ma, there's a powerful heap of work for a man to do these days."

And then he throwed back his head, like he was laughing, but the sound what come from his mouth didn't sound like nothing funny to me. I noticed how white he looked in the light from the lamp and how old and wrinkled-up his face was for just a boy. It made me feel sick all over. I knew who he had been going with and I knew what sort of doings he had been up to without him telling me.

So I says, "Them Reds is agoing to get you into trouble, son. You better 'tend to your own business and obey the law and let them Reds alone."

But he just keep on laughing, like he was doing before without nothing funny or happy in it, and says, "You better not talk about them Reds like that no more, ma, you liable to hurt my feelings. Yes," he says, "you liable to hurt your own son's feelings. *Us* Reds," he says, "*us* Reds is got aplenty to do without no bad advice, and we aims to do it." That's what he says, and he thinks I don't know what's on his mind, and he keeps right on: "And when I ain't here for supper," he says, "just wash up the dishes and put 'em away, ma, because I'll be busy."

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And he laughed some more. "And when I stays out late at night you just rest easy in your bed, ma, because I'm in good company with a lot of other people. They's hunderd millyun of us, ma," he says, "scattered here and there about the world if you'd only stop to count us. Us workers is more numerous like the sands of the sea, ain't we?" he says, "and we is just beginning to find it out, and we ain't got no time for sleeping even in the night time."

Well, I knew where he had got all that kind of talk from, and I didn't like it. Not that I ain't had my full share of misery from the mills, girl and woman, wife and mother, God knows I have! I give a husband to 'em, and three sons before Jim, and I hate 'em and them what owns 'em, God knows I do!

But I been around here a long time, and I know what comes from fighting 'em. I seen plenty of men try before. And when I hear my boy, Jim, which is just a kid and the only thing I got left in the world, running his lip off about standing up against the bosses, about collecting all the workers together to fight 'em, I got memories that come to me and send cold chills up my back, and I ain't got no more strength or reason than a baby.

So I says, fighting for time, "Look here, son, I ain't young no more and I ain't strong, and I ain't got nothing in this world left but you. Now I can't make no kind of argument with you since you is too smart for me. But I got this thing all figured out in my own way setting in front of this stove all night long waiting for you, and I ask you to set here a minute and listen to me."

'Twas getting on toward daylight. Through the window I see a little yellow creeping up behind the mountains and I know it ain't long before the sun comes popping up like it was shot from a cannon. I ain't got much time I know, so I pulls up a chair beside the stove for Jim and tells him to set down.

"All right," he says, hesitating a minute and then setting down, "spill it, ma," he says, "but make it fast, because I ain't got but a few minutes and then I got to be leaving here."

Now I been here a long time and I keep my ears open and I knew where he was going and what he was going for. Today was the day the bosses was going to start putting everybody outa mill houses what hadn't paid their rent, and I had heard all the talk that had been going round in Milltown, since the Reds come, about not standing for it no more, about all the mill people joining together to keep themselves and

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their wives and children from being thrown out into the streets by the bosses.

So I says, "Look here, son, you better think twice before you go to fighting with the bosses." He lifts his head kind of surprised, but I didn't give him a chance to say nothing. "The bosses," I says, "will get the best of you in the end, no matter what you do. You only got one chance with 'em—if you act meek and humble and keep your mouth shut and work your heart out for 'em, they'll give you enough to keep living so you can keep on making money for them. That's your only chance, son the way things are between you and the bosses. But if you act foolish, if you go around talking too much, if you try to fight 'em, they'll hate you and spy against you and—and kill you. Now. . . . "

. *But Jim had done jumped to his feet.* "*Look here, ma,*" *he hollers,* "you don't mean nothing like that. You is just so skeered for me, you done stopped thinking sense. I won't listen to that kinda talk from you, ma, or nobody else," he hollers, "I done already make up my mind, and it ain't no use for you to try to fool me. I ain't got time to argue with you, but they's a hunderd millyun of us,ain't they? and we is more numerous like the sands of the sea, ain't we, ma? And if we just stick together, if we stand by each other and fight for each other and don't take nothing more off of the bosses, we is bound to win in the end, ain't we? even if some of us does get killed?"

Well, he looked so serious standing there by the stove with the yellow sky behind him that I couldn't say nothing, not a word. He grabs me by the shoulders, his eyes shining, "They been killing us all the time, ma, that's what you got to understand. Look at pa," he says, his voice calmer; he had done stopped shouting, "and Ed and Joe and Sam," he says, naming his brothers what died from the mills in one way or another, direct or indirect; "the ground around here is red with the blood of us workers now, ain't it, ma? And ain't nobody gonta stop it, but ourselves, us workers," he says, "us Reds. Yes," he says, "they got guns and they got cops and they got money and they got power, but, ma, they's a hunderd millyun of us, ain't they? and we is more numerous like the sands of the sea, ain't we?"

I couldn't say a word. I just set there in front of the stove. I knew I had lost him, I had knowed it all the time, but he was my only son left and I got to be excused for fighting for him a little.

But I didn't say nothing—I knew there wan't nothing I could do, nothin wan't gonta stop him now, not cops, not soldiers, not bosses, not

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mothers, not nothing. My boy had done fell in love with something you couldn't put your hand on like a woman and love her up for a night or two and then forget her. My boy had done give himself away to something men don't never grow tired of, and there wan't nothing I could do about it.

So I didn't say a word. When he finished talking and goes into his room and I see him through the door taking down the old rifle his pa used to shoot squirrels with in the mountains before we ever come to these God forsaken mills, I don't open my mouth. He come back into the room and stands there with the risen sun behind him, holding that gun in his two hands and looking at me. And I don't say a word, I don't open my mouth.

"So long, ma," he says, his voice a little shaky, "I got to be leaving here."

"All right, son," I manages to say, and can't move outa my chair to save my life, I got such a sudden pain across my chest.

"So long, ma," he says again, like he had forgot he said it once already, "don't you fret none, they ain't got nothing to be skeered of."

"All right, son," I says, "take keer of yourself wherever you goes."

I set paralyzed in my chair by the stove and watch him go down the street, half humming, with that old squirrel rifle of his pa's crooked over his right arm. When he come to the corner and I can't see him no more, I jumps up and run after him. I says to myself all of a sudden, "Wherever Jim goes, I gotta go, too!" I can't keep back the tears no more, and as I run after him I hear my own breath coming and going like it was somebody else running along beside me. When I reach the corner, I see him way down the street.

"Son," I yell, "Jim, wait for me!"

But he don't hear me. I hadn't slept none and I'm getting weaker and weaker all the time, and the heavy panting is tearing the guts out of me. My head starts going round and round and I can't see which way to go. Pretty soon somebody grabs me and I collapses.

"What's wrong here!" I hear somebody holler, way off, and then somebody hollers again, "what's wrong with her?"

"Us workers," I says, "us Reds. . . . "

"What's that?" somebody asks closer to me, "who's dead?"

"We're a hunderd millyun, ain't we?" I yell, "we is more numerous like the sands of the sea, ain't we?"

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ROOM WITH REVOLUTIONISTS

Look at this man in the room before you:
He is young, his skin is dark, his hair
curly and black, his eyes are strangely blue,
he comes from a warmer land under the sun.
He hears a North American speak calmly
of a beautiful and faithless mistress
and is amazed. This man's a revolutionist,
painter of huge areas, editor
of fiery and terrifying words, leader
of the poor who plant, the poor who burrow
under the earth in field and mine.
His life's an always upward-delving battle in
an old torn sweater, the pockets always empty.

And this his companion across the room:
younger than he: the smooth deep forehead
sheathing a subtle and redoubtable brain;
his hair dark, eyes upward-slanting at the corners,
lips clean-etched and full. This man,
nurtured in a northern city
is a poet, master of strong sensuous words,
artist in his own right. His oratory
before many listeners is like the sudden
startling completeness of summer rain:
warm, clear and clean, soaking into
the very heart of you, the sun just beyond.

This man is my brother, Communist, friend,
counsellor of my youth and manhood. He has crossed
the seething continent a hundred times,
leaving behind him his words
and the sound of them and their meaning.

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The heavy drowsy wine of a tropic land
and the sharp bouquet of the northland intermingle
here in this room: these two are held
umbilical to a greater source and destiny,
welded each to each more firmly
than each to his native land.
Their vision
parallels their warmth, transcends all frontiers.

Look at them here at ease
relaxed in this pleasant room:
you will not see them again
together for many years.
Tomorrow each will go
his separate way on the maps of the globe
across great distances, talking, painting,
writing poems, organizing,
welding together South-and North-men,
destroying boundaries.

EDWIN ROLFE

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I CAME NEAR BEING A FASCIST

Ramon Fernandez

I CAME NEAR BEING A FASCIST. I did not miss it by far, merely by the commonplace material circumstance of not having been absent from Paris from February 6 to 12. For in the position that I was in, there was no ideological nicety that could have brought me to this side of the barricades, no reasoned argument, but rather, an atmosphere of passion and of struggle was required—to put it briefly, acts of violence witnessed at first hand and reconstructed in such a fashion as to bring out the truth inherent in them. In relating my little story (I must beg pardon once for all for speaking of myself, a thing that I do none too well), I shall perhaps be contributing worth while testimony. In any event, what I shall have to say will be nearer the truth than it would be if I were to rely upon unfamiliar data or to fall back upon general reflections.

I came, then, near being a Fascist. Fascism is a clever trap set for well intentioned bourgeois intellectuals, sufficiently disinterested but lazy, as is the case with all those who derive profit from an established form of society. I answered this description very well. Add to this a professional fondness for theorizing, which tends to make one highly susceptible to original "solutions." Taken all in all, and naturally along with its other aspects, Fascism is the art of quieting the social unrest of intellectuals, by leading them to engage in a revolution which will neither alter their habits nor sacrifice their interests.

"So, you want a revolution, do you? Very well. You want to put down capitalism? Fair enough. You would like to see fresh proletarian blood injected into the body social? Agreed upon that."

But inasmuch as it is the big capitalist who finances those "anti-capitalist" groups to which the newly fledged revolutionist becomes attached, the latter finds it unnecessary to renounce any of the advantages he formerly enjoyed, from dining out to fat fees from the press. The trick is easily turned. All that our intellectual friend requires is a little sophistical justification, and he is persuaded that he is acting to the best interests of all.

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The thing he forgets, however, is that one cannot satisfy everybody at once, the rich and the poor, the oppressor and the oppressed. That would be too good to be true. To put it a bit differently, the Fascist revolution pretends to ignore that which is the main-spring of any positive revolution, the class-struggle. Now, the tremendous effect of the events in February has been to render the class-struggle perceptible to those who, out of touch with the daily social conflict, might have gone on doubting. But let the reader judge for himself.

From the 7th of February on, after reading the newspapers, it became apparent to me that the working class constituted the sole rampart capable of protecting the interests of the Left, the spirit of the Left, if you like. I did not then understand "spirit of the Left" in a Marxist sense. My course of reasoning might have been that of any sincere radical, that of any man concerned with parliamentary liberties. There was even discoverable in my attitude at the time a potentiality for working class exploitation in the interests of the small bourgeoisie; I realize this today, and I repudiate it. But let us go on.

I accordingly had quite ingenuously signed a call for anti-Fascist concentration and the general strike. My signature appeared beneath that of Alain, who had never been looked upon as a Marat. The Marxian Communists had found difficulty in bringing themselves to sign this appeal, since it embodied a broad spirit of conciliation, with a view to joint action. A few days later, a very intimate friend of my family, who had invited me to dinner for the following day, called me on the telephone to cancel the invitation; and this, to the letter, is what she said to me: *"I cannot receive any one who has a pistol trained on me and mine."*

Now, this person knew me very well, and from my earliest childhood had shown me many acts of kindness. I may add that, before reading the call, my host had even invited me as being "of the Left," with the remark: "You will wear a red rose in your buttonhole and give us a nice little talk." For in the salons, those microcosmic societies, any opinion will be tolerated so long as it is not manifested by deed.

From this on (I pass over other similar occurrences), there were but two courses of procedure open to me. One was to make honorable amends by saying, "I am sorry, but I am afraid I went a trifle too far." A bait was here set for my indolence; and I was informed that the Place de la Concorde, on the 6th of February, was jammed with artisans and small trades-people. The other course was to bring myself to a realiza-

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tion, one which they had forced upon me, of the true significance of my adversaries' attitude.

My previous acquaintance with Marxism proved to be my salvation. I have to thank my university apprenticeship for having afforded me the opportunity, in 1916, to commentate Marx's *Capital* for the benefit of revolutionary socialist students of the Sorbonne. Once one has had a good dose of Marxism, one may permit oneself to be seduced by indolence or cowardice, but it still gnaws away at you; it is like Freudism, only a good deal worse. Just as a Freudian can never mistake his sexual instinct for a philanthropic urge, so a Marxist—even a Marxist by reading only—can never confuse the defense of a ministerial portfolio with a "re-awakening of the national consciousness." It is as impossible as it would be to believe that two and two make five.

With this, I wrote for the N.R.F., for the month of March, a short article entiled *For Unity of Action*. I still posted myself, out of conscientious scruple, within the confines of the bourgeoisie of the Left. I merely took care to insert, by way of conclusion, the following sentence: "In the pursuit of a heretofore chimerical unity, it is well for those of the Left to reflect upon a certain enormous advantage which those of the Right have over them: namely, a unity naturally created by possession and a joint interest in possession." May my enemies forgive me, it was a species of trap. And the game fell into it. At once, the story was started that the walls of Paris were covered with sanguinary proclamations (whether of communistic or anarchistic inspiration was not quite clear) bearing my signature. All the drawingrooms which I was in the habit of frequenting, as luck would have it, now closed to me.

Certain ones, assuming from my name that I was a foreigner, proceeded to threaten me with the fate of those undesirables who, some day or other, were going to have to be driven out of a long-suffering France. Others, better informed as to my civil status, thought seriously of having me de-naturalized. M. François Mauriac, who insists upon making public an argument which, out of friendship for him, I should have preferred to keep private, grew indignant, in *Sept* and in the *Echo de Paris,* at my having "dared" to speak of possession and an interest in possession; and yet, all the while, on the 6th of February, the Place de la Concorde was packed with the poor and the small of station, protesting against corruption. Seeing that I had very clearly stated in my article that *all shades* of opinion were represented in the Place de la Concorde, the only conclusion I can come to is, that M. Mauriac, and his friends as well,

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must have been affected by a grain of truth which I had handed him, one covered over by the booming of the sentimental bass-drum in the hands of his lusty comrade, Philippe Henriot.

The explanations that followed were more revealing still. One eminent and esteemed writer wrote to me: "If the victory goes to what you call the Right, it will only be in so far as the Right, as in the case of Mussolini or of Hitler, finds support in the people, with Draconian measures being taken for the first time against unemployment, and with syndcalism left free in essence, being merely kept separate from politics. Otherwise, it will be you who triumph, and that will be so much the worse for *us.*"

The straightforward allusion to Mussolini and Hitler is in itself significant, but what follows tends to clarify what has gone before:

"The thing that you lack is an acquaintance with that enormous class to which I belong, where my roots are, and which, given over to ruin or despair, is now about to furnish a new proletariat, not so well organized as the other, and, it must be added, not so resigned to its lot, but adapted to privation and to misery. To come down to particular instances, there is X——, for example, or Y——'s daughers, now clerking in a bookstore or selling shoes—it's a come-down for nearly every one of them."

I pass over the hallucinatory evidence of misery represented by clerking in a bookstore or selling shoes. If you take what my correspondent has to say concerning the "come-down" of the middle classes and compare those workers' syndicates which, under Hitler or Mussolini, are *kept separate from politics,* you will readily perceive that his desire is for the middle class to take over the direction of the government, subordinating the interests of the workers to its own interests, and all this *for purely economic reasons.* In other words, the bourgeois class, financed by capitalism, intends to preserve its full powers and, what is more, to consolidate those powers with regard to the working class, all with the best of intentions, no doubt; but we all know what the home of good intentions is.

From this moment forth, I could no longer in all decency deny the factual existence of the class-struggle. If this were not so, why should my correspondent and others like him shed so many tears over young ladies employed in bookstores, while worrying so little over the frightful wretchedness of a vast portion of the proletariat, a wretchedness of which he, undoubtedly, is ignorant, *but which he does not care to know anything*

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about. It was plain to me that the confusions of the 7th of February were marvelously favorable to the bourgeois class, which was taking advantage of those confusions to attempt to save itself at any cost. Now, while I might put up with the bourgeoisie when it went about its business smilingly, its tears and its grimaces on the score of oppression were a little more than I could bear.

I thereupon wrote my *Open Letter* to André Gide, in which I definitely crossed the economic barricade, since on the other side all that I could see was confusion, double dealing and hypocrisy. The result was unlooked for. Letters cancelling subscriptions to the N.R.F. and insults directed at the writer vied with the April showers in frequency. One lady in "good" society, who prides herself on being something of a philosopher, whote:

"Let M. Fernandez take sides, as he instinctively does, with the corrupters and the corrupted and with the assassins; but let him not hold responsible for this alleged conversion of his those who have been the unfortunate and altogether praiseworthy victims. M. Fernandez, of course, is a foreigner; and this is by way of being an excuse, not for his intellectual character, for which no excuse is to be found, but simply for himself as an individual; for as a consequence, he is not qualified to judge French reactions nor to appreciate the character, the moral significance and the trend of an event such as that of the 6th of February. The *Pocket-Book* has nothing to do with the case; it is simply a matter of decency and of national pride, which is absolutely excluded from M. Fernandez' reasoning."

This incomparable document constitutes what scholars of old used to term an *experimentum crucis.* I hardly need take advantage of the lady's indignation by calling attention to the fact that, in replying to a letter in which I had expressed a sense of solidarity with the proletariat (which grew indignant like the other classes, and with how much more reason, that 6th of February, and which protested with the others against a putrid regime), she lets it be seen that she looks upon the proletariat as corruptors, corrupted and assassins. Nor shall I fall out with her over her lack of good faith in making it appear that I hold responsible for my conversion those victims of whom I might have been one, and to whom, in the letter in question, I had paid my proper respects.

I shall say nothing, finally, of the singular lack of mental co-ordination which leads my correspondent to apply the epithet of foreigner to one who makes common cause with the exploited of a nation against a

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small nucleus of employers who are strongly internationalized, by their alliances and in their interests. I would do no more than underscore the incredible ignorance which this document lays bare with regard to the real motives of social action on the part of those engaged in it. Such ignorance is the most faborable soil there is for the growth of Fascism.

This same incredible ignorance is shared by those qualified writers who made public reply to me. M. Thierry Maulnier (I think I may say that I have studied his ideas with more attention than he has given to mine), in the *Action Française* and in the *Revue Universelle,* applies the adjectives "low" and "ignoble" to that "egalitarian humanitarianism" with which, along with the Marxists it seems, I am tarred. How easy all that is! As to egalitarianism, I shall let Stalin do the speaking: "Bourgeois writers are fond of describing Marxian socialism as something resembling an old Czarist barracks, where everything is subordinated to the 'principle of leveling'! But Marxists are hardly to be held responsible for the ignorance and stupidity of bourgeois writers."

As for "humanitarianism," M. Maulnier and his kind are so extremely refined as to be shocked by the foul odor arising from the suffering and the wretchedness of mankind. They have been so corrupted by the sophistry of their schoolmasters that they look upon the task of causing humanity as a whole to benefit from human wealth and human production as a breakdown of Christianity (?) and of humanism (!). Whatever happens, they cannot endure being shown crudely what the debate is about. They will not tolerate being told to their faces that it is a question of fighting for those that are hungry. No, indeed! Among intellectuals, that's not playing the game; and the Christian, M. Mauriac, hastens to stigmatize as election literature those lines in which I announce that I have chosen the side of the empty pocket-books.

I must confess that I knew very well what I was doing, when I thus put foot in the fire. My opponents may go on piling up big words; I now know, without any doubt, just where it is the shoe pinches them. It will not take them long to find out for themselves, if they will only practice that examination of conscience which their religion teaches them, or which their Nietzschean pride ought to teach them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you heartily. After having been wavering friends, you have become for me the most dependable of teachers. You have knocked from my eyes, one after another, the scales that hid my sight. You have made me a Communist, or the next thing to it. At any rate, you have made me a revolutionist. I now know that your values are

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hollow, and that the most decent of you is content to take as gods the windmills of capitalism, which he is careful not to clog. That intellectual élite of yours, which you defend so zealously, is no longer existent; you are but the slaves of encrusted habit—habits like your pipe tobacco and your seat in the café. Your very nationalism is a lie, since it takes in but an infinitesimal fraction of the entire nation, which labors and suffers for you, and which will soon once more be getting itself killed for you, if one does not look sharply.

There is possible an economic system which, freeing mankind from want, shall lift real humanity to the plane of real power; yet you are so blinded by self-interest, by indolence or by fear, that you see in all this only humanity's downfall. So much the worse for you, Ladies and Gentlemen. You are throttling us, and in return, you bring us nothing. You are closing up your ranks on nothingness; but as you are still very strong, you succeed in bridling and muzzling the life-urge. This guard you keep about nothingness, this safeguarding of the unsavable, this negative social short-circuiting is what goes to make up Fascism.

RAMON FERNANDEZ
(*From the French by Samuel Putnam*)

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STORM IN TEXAS

Nelson Algren

INTO THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST OF LAST YEAR there came to West Texas days hot beyond bearing. Every morning the sun rose red as blood, as though intent on scourging every living thing off the earth before it set. The cotton growers along the river saw their crops wither before them in the red heat. In town none ventured out save he who must; our streets were deserted. On the ranches the cattle sought escape by lying all day in the long shade of the barns, but there was no escape. The blood-fat green bottle flies tortured the cattle where they lay. Boone Terry, my boss, lost over a dozen head through the milk fever . . . the cows' bags became caked and heavy and dried up; then they had to be amputated to save the animal's lives. Every night a hot, foolish small breeze would come skipping and hissing out of the east, running like an evil little buffoon from doorstep to doorstep, as though to tell those within of the coming of rain; but everyone knew the small breeze lied, even the cattle mocked it with lowing. So it would whisper away to the west, like a cat racing out from under a henhouse with feathers in its fur.

Into the limitless yellow sky the steam from the roundhouse rose slowly, slowly; straight up into the air it rose, more like a pillar than the tossing white plume which one always sees there when there are clouds in the sky. But there were no clouds—day after day the sky yawped hungrily for them, yellow and threatening. And, watching that white pillar rise against that yellow wall, I remembered a proverb my mother once taught me:

"There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things that say not, 'It is Enough', the grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, 'It is enough'." I thought: "When the sky is yellow and has no clouds it is like the earth not filled with water."

And I wondered, too, if it is true what people are saying, that soon there is going to be war again.

During this spell fires broke out in the town and in the fields. In

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the middle of the night a box-car loaded with sheep caught fire while standing on a siding on the Santa Fe. For some reason, everyone seemed to think that the car had been fired deliberately. The frightened bleating of the trapped beasts and the glow in the sky brought the townsfolk out half-dressed and tousled from sleep; two shirtless men unsealed the doors of the blazing box with pokers. Then in panic the foolish animals inside blocked both escapes with their lunging bodies, so that all but half a dozen or so were burned to a turn. One old ram butted his way out with his fleece on fire, racing crazily through the dust of Laredo Street, bawling blindly all the while, thwarted every attempt to throw water on him until he fell and was unable to rise. . . .

I asked to whom the sheep belonged, and a woman standing atop the railroad embankment called down, "Boone Terry's!"

"Terry's? Are you sure?" I could scarcely believe it, you see, because Boone is my boss.

"Saw the seal on the car when they opened the door."

After that, somehow, a holiday spirit crept into the night, and a strange half-religious air. I had the same feeling then as I had had once when watching a Holy Roller meeting—an air as of something half-supernatural seized hold of me. Down in the dust of the street below a living beast was struggling in its own flame, and the fronts of the stores on Main and Laredo were all aglow with the reflected flare, like pagan temples burning. The glass of their windows was shimmering in molten green-gold streams, and about me the panicky bleating and screams of the animals mingled with hard laughter of mountain men and women.

"Boone Terry's!—Are y'all right sure in the face o' thet now?"

"Say now, the jesus-god, wouldn't everone feel downhearten ef Boone has let the insurance lapse?"

Boone Terry has a great many enemies in our town you see, because, although he is the richest rancher in Brewster county, he does not give milk to the charity station. Instead, he gives money to the churches, and the churches feel it more important to save souls than to buy milk. Boone has given to every church in town save the Catholic church, which is Mexican. To the Mexican Methodists, however, he once gave an organ.

From where I stood I could see that the ram's hindquarters were already burned black; and as I stood there, listening to the beast's last screams, watching its last dying kicks. I became conscious of a tall dark figure beside me, and looked up: It was the Reverend Jeff Harrigan, and I shied away, for I have not been to the church for a long time now. The

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tall man did not seem to notice me, however. He looked under his bushy eyebrows down at the ram in the flame below, and he spoke in such a deep and biblical voice that the laughter all about us died. In our town this man is regarded, by the Campbellites, as a prophet of the Lord.

"Behold—the fire and the wood, and also the lamb, for a burnt offering. Did not Abraham say unto Isaac his son, God will provide the lamb for the burnt offering? And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns."

A strange silence followed this; then the tall man turned abruptly on his heel, leaving a silence behind him. He walks the streets all night, people say, and communes with Christ Jesus.

Down below, my friend was pouring water on the hindquarters of the animal, and the woman atop the embankment shattered the silence that the preacher had left by calling down, "Might as well let 'im burn all th' way now, Luke, an' pour the rest down yore own arse iested. Thet need coolin' too y'know."

Everybody laughed, and a Mexican came up from the roundhouse with an ax, and ended the beast's suffering with a blow. He stood astradle the animal and, with a single swing, split the skull in two.

The woman on the embankment called down, "Don't take that haid home with yo', spik—elts y'all hev to buy Boone a new ram t'morrer." Nobody laughed this time, however.

The day after the fire I passed the carcass where it still lay in the road, and I saw that out of the unburned flank several steaks had been cut. I imagine that, before evening, the dogs had the rest. That was high noon when I passed, and so still was the air that I could faintly hear the tapping of someone's hammer on wood away over on the other side of the arroyo, three miles distant. All things seemed to be standing still, holding breath, everything was waiting for no one knew quite what; yet nothing dared to move, nothing dared to stir, everything waited . . . and into this calm there burst, with incredible violence, a dry hot wind from the west. Screaming, hissing—everyone heard it when it was yet miles off and ran to hide—then it tore through the town tossing sand as high as the rooftops and hurling it with insane malice against the windows, smashing panes and whirling in clouds into the rooms where the people huddled; and the sky grew so dark that, although it was noon, the day was dark as a starless night; as a night when a thousand Indian demons whirling in black and yellow robes rush screaming from doorway onto doorway, dashing themselves against the houses, shaking the boards and

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the beams and the rafters, the while they shriek in a red mad rage. . . .

In the morning five houses and a dozen windmills had been blown down, and every window-pane in town had been shattered. The streets were littered with chicken feathers, cinders, cotton, and aged yellow newspapers. Yet there had been not a drop of rain.

On the Terry ranch twenty cattle were lost during this storm. Big Boone came into the ranch house in the very worst of it and ordered the men to round up the cattle before it was too late. When we refused, fearing to become sand-blinded, he discharged the four standing nearest him.

Two days later Wayne Hafey, foreman of the branding unit, took sick of the heat while at work; and, because he was given no medical aid, died on the bunk where he lay.

There was much dissatisfaction after that, and news of the trouble was echoed in town by the complaints of the railroading men there. Yet none of us quit when pay day came. There are too few other jobs to be had. We contented ourselves by saying, "Times'll get better pretty soon now, and then we can be a bit more independent. Times are bound to get better pretty soon now. They just can't get any worse."

In September the heat wave was broken by three days of steady rain. The days were tolerable then; they are cool now. But times are not better. The men speak of striking. They are living on jerked beef, croton coffee and sour bread.

Yes, the nights are cool now, and in the mornings one is wakened refreshed by a light breeze blowing from up the river. Yet the grumbling has not ceased, somehow. The men do their work as always, but they are thinking of young Wayne Hafey, how he died because no doctor came out to the ranch house. . . .

And we are thinking, too, of what we will do if what people are saying about another war comes true.

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JOHNNY

Alfred Hayes

JOHNNY SLEPT WITH THE GERMAN BAKER and the ex-army officer who was the pantryman. The baker played the accordion in the evening. He played East Side West Side, and Sweet Rosie O'Grady and Du, du leigst mir im Herzen. The ex-army officer who was the pantryman lay on his back in the cot and smoked a cigarette. He blew rings up at the flaps of the tent very carefully. First he would blow a ring of smoke, watch it curl upward until it dissolved, and then he would blow another ring of smoke carefully. He did this for hours because he could not understand the Polish and German the baker or Johnny or the chef spoke.

Johnny, the old Polack who was the dishwasher, sat on the edge of the bed and cut the hard burning callous on the bottom of his foot with a razor blade. As he cut the flesh he screwed up his eyes in anticipation of the pain. The brown leathery skin of his face cracked into countless lines and under his long drooping moustache he sucked in his dry thin lips.

On the corner of the bed sat the little bowlegged chef, Mike. Every night after work Mike came down to the tent to smoke a cigarette and drink a couple of bottles of beer before he went to sleep. He had to drink a great deal in order to sleep because he lived in the Main House where the guests danced at night. In spite of the fact that he was very tired he had to drink four of five bottles to fall asleep because the music and the pounding feet shook the whole house.

Also, he was very lonely and he missed the big Polish girl named Greta who came to see him every Thursday night when he was in the city.

Johnny grunted cutting the hard lump of flesh on the bottom of his foot. The shoes he wore were cracked and broken and standing in water all day in the room where he washed the dishes only made his foot worse. He had a dirty bandage wrapped around his thumb which he had cut on a piece of broken glass in the stone washtub. He kept telling the Missus that she should get a new washtub, that he could not work in a stone

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washtub, but the Missus kept putting it off because of the expense. It was a deep cut almost down to the bone and it ached with a dull throbbing pain that moved up the length of his arm. But Johnny said nothing and went on pearl diving in the hot soapy water day after day because he was afraid that if he stopped working because of his thumb he would be fired.

Before he came to this camp in the mountains to work for the summer he had been a dishwasher in an Old Folks Home in Westchester and when he decided to quit to go away to work in the mountains the boss came to him and said: Johnny, you no leave, you good worker, Johnny, and Johnny knew it was a good job and he was getting twenty dollars a month and board and food and the work was easy but he went away to the mountains for a "vacation." After he had worked two weeks in the camp he regretted having left the Old Folks Home and said: Johnny, one damn fool. Boss say to me, Johnny you no leave, but Johnny one damn fool and go to the mountains.

He got up in the morning when everybody was still asleep and the mountains were heavy with mist and there was hoarfrost on the road. Crawling tiredly into his wet stiff shoes he limped down to the firehouse to make the furnace so there will be hot showers for the guests when at nine o'clock they came downstairs.

He cut wood in the yard for the stove for the little bowlegged chef when at seven he came clumping ill-temperedly into the kitchen. Then Johnny washed the cups from the tea the guests had the night before while they played a couple of rounds of bridge on the porch in the moonlight. And later, standing up beside the waiters, he drank a cup of coffee. When the waiters drank two or more cups of coffee to prop up their falling eyelids, because as the chef said, they made "too much pushy-push in the bushes" at night, Johnny shook his head and said,

"You rich man. Rich man drink two cups of coffee."

He really said landowner. In far away Poland there was a wife and a son who had served in the artillery and a little farm, no bigger than a handkerchief, and Johnny who had worked in the mines in West Virginia and in the kitchens of a hundred restaurants and hotels and homes still dreamed of someday going home to the little farm no bigger than a handkerchief.

And at night in the tent when the German baker played the accordion and the pantryman who was the ex-army officer blew smoke rings carefully and the chef drank down his two bottles of beer, Johnny told stories,

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peasant fairy tales to the chef and the chef sometimes translated.

There was a Kapelmeister from Wien and the Kapelmeister met a devil who said to him, "Come tomorrow night to my wedding and play for me." And the Kapelmeister went to the wedding of the devil and played for him. And the dancers and the beautiful women and the noble lords threw heaps of gold coins into the Kapelmeister's hat. And soon, sweating and hot, the Kapelmeister had to go out into the garden. When he was in the garden he saw the bridegroom enter and dip his finger in a basin of water that stood under a tall tree and rub the water on his eyes. And when the bridegroom went away the Kapelmeister did likewise but he only dipped in his little finger and rubbed it only on his left eye. And behold! no sooner had he done this than he could see the Truth! That the beautiful house of the nobleman was made of human blood and dung! And in the ballroom, not beautiful ladies and lords were dancing, but devils! And not gold was thrown into his hat, but brass and worthless junk! But the Kapelmeister played out the evening and said nothing and went away and thereafter he could see the Truth—but with only one eye, only half-the-truth.

It is so with all men, said Johnny. But he himself did not know what the other half of the Truth was that the Kapelmeister had not seen.

He smiled, his teeth stained with tobacco, and his long peasant's moustache drooping over his mouth, and the yellow sole of his foot that ached and burned him clasped in his hand as he cut the hard lump of flesh with an old razor blade.

Nor did his thumb heal. It grew worse, it turned green, it swelled as thick as a cucumber, he could not sleep at night from the flow and ebb of pain in his arm. And yet he continued to crawl into his wet stiff shoes every morning when the mountains were heavy with mist to fix the furnace for the hot showers. There was a glaze over his eyes, as though he could not see through a mist of pain, and he took to working with only his left hand.

The little bowlegged chef told Johnny to stop working, to go down and rest. In the heat of the afternoon the thermometer over the big black stove stood at 105 degrees. Sweat ran in rivers down the kitchenmen's faces. But Johnny shook his head obstinately. No, no, he could work. The thumb was three times its thickness. He carried it wrapped in the same dirty bandage. "You one goddam fool," the chef said. The German baker shook his head. "What can you do with a man like that?

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Works like a horse and for what? The Missus don't give a damn about him."

The Missus, in a white tennis dress, her small sharp eyes always watching to see that nothing in the kitchen went to waste, came to Johnny and said,

"Can you work, Johnny?" She averted her eyes when she saw the huge dirty bandage around the thumb. "Ja," Johnny answered, shaking his head stubbornly, his eyes glazed with pain, "me work, Missus, me always work."

"Goddam sap," said the pantryman, listening.

But one morning Johnny could not get out of bed at all. He lay in the damp misted twilight of the tent and moaned. Sweat stood out on his forehead. His whole arm was stiff and swollen. Nobody was awake in the tent and he lay there struggling to rise and crawl into the wet stiff shoes under the bed.

The furnace had to be fixed. Hot water for the showers. Johnny had to be up and working. He struggled, moaning with pain, but his body would not answer.

The pantryman, awakened, took one look at the figure struggling on the bed and the huge arm and ran for the camp doctor who had arrived the night before.

The doctor got two weeks vacation free in exchange for his services. He didn't like the idea of being used the first morning he got to camp. There was a girl who was an ex-nurse. They got her to help.

The tent was wet and soggy with dew. The girl got a smell of the air inside the tent and grimaced. Johnny lay on his back in the darkness, moaning. He slept in his khaki shirt and long dirty underwear.

The doc lifted his hand and stripped off the dirty crusted bandage. Huge, green, pusfilled, the enormous thumb emerged from the rag.

"O my god," the girl said.

"You better get some boiled water quick," the doc said, "we'll have to cut."

Johnny groaned "ah, ah," heavily in pain. "Must work, nobody can work," he groaned.

"You lay still, Johnny," the doc said, "somebody will do your work."

"Nobody," Johnny groaned on the cot, "nobody do my work."

The girl came back with a kettle of boiled water. "He's afraid he'll lose his job," the doc said. "Better bring the old lady down."

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"Ah, Missus, Missus," Johnny moaned.

The doc filled a basin with hot water. "Put your hand in, Johnny," he said, "that's right. Let it soak, see. Soak."

The girl came back with the Missus. She was sleepy, frightened, "I told him he could rest, I told him somebody else could do his work," she kept saying.

"Nobody," moaned Johnny, "everybody busy. Only me do work. Only me wash."

"Tell him he won't be fired," the doc said, "I think he's afraid you'll fire him."

"Is that what he's worried about?" the Missus said, "God, I'll never understand these people."

"Johnny," said the Missus, bending over the cot, "Johnny, you don't need to worry. Understand? Don't worry. Everything will be all right. Eddie will help do the dishes. Understand?"

"Ah, Missus, Missus," Johnny groaned, "I can no work, sick, sick."

"Yes, Yes," the Missus said, the thumb huge and green in the basin of water sickening her, "you rest. Understand? No worry."

"I told stone washtub no good, no good," Johnny said, twisting his face up to look at her, "stone no good washing dishes."

"I know. I know, Johnny. We'll have a new one. Understand? A new one. No dishes break."

"Ah, Missus, Missus."

"All right," the doc said, "now Johnny, you just lie still, see. You just lie still."

The small blue eyes looked up at him, understanding nothing, throbbing to the pain.

"There's nothing we can give him," the doc said to the girl, "He'll have to take it raw."

The girl held Johnny's arm. "Can you hold him?" The doc asked. "I guess so." "You deserve a canoe ride for this," the doc said, laying out his instruments, "how about it?" "This is a swell place to ask me?" the girl said. Johnny jerked with pain. "No, no, Johnny," the doc cautioned, "you lie still." "Sick, sick," Johnny faintly whispered through his drawn lips. "OK?" the doc said to the girl. "Shoot," she said.

He lanced the thumb with a swift stroke, slicing cleanly with the scalpel through the disfigured nail to the bone. A stream of pus shot out into the doctor's face. With an oath, he dropped the bloody, pus-running hand and sprang for the disinfectant. Quickly spilling some on a towel

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he dabbed his eyes and face, swearing. The hand leaking pus hung down beside the bed.

Johnny was screaming, twitching, struggling. The girl, holding his shoulder ,shouted, "Doc, Doc, take him!"

Outside, the first guests were clumping down the stairs for their hot showers.

That night Johnny was feverish. The arm and hand, dressed in a clean bandage, throbbed and burned. The next morning he lay in his cot while one of the waiters brought down coffee and a piece of toast for his breakfast. It was the first time he had ever lain in bed after five o'clock in the morning. He heard the birds begin singing, he saw the ground lighten with sunlight. But he felt guilty, fearful, restless lying like that after five o'clock passed.

He did not wait for the thumb to heal. Next morning he was out in the yard chopping wood with his left hand. The Missus, of course, had not gotten a new man but made the pantryman and the waiters do Johnny's work in addition to their own. Gradually, Johnny understood that he was not fired. A warm feeling of thankfulness flowed through him. He had been sick and lain in bed past five o'clock and the Missus had not fired him. He bowed and scraped when he saw her walking down the road in her white tennis dress like the lady of a manor. "Ah, Missus, Missus," the small blue eyes blinking gratefully.

"Goddam sap," said the pantryman, "she's making us do his work. Catch her spending an extra dime."

It is so with all men, said Johnny. But what the other half of the Truth was neither he nor the Kapelmeister knew.

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IN A HOTEL LOBBY

These are the well-to-do, the managers of the nation,
Trains from the North and West and South,
ships from the East, planes through the sky
from capitals and emporiums have rushed them here.
Porters with ironic eyes and automatic, sirring lips
escort them here to sit, lined deep in plush.

Beside them stir their imperious women.
Their hair threatens like lions' manes;
their eyes rove like killing eagles;
their lips look cut from stone;
their hands take lightly like the hands
of Aztec priests who timed fresh human hearts
beating on their palms.

Strange beside their cruel beauty are the mutilated men.
Bushmen chiefs with knives and spikes and stains
have not more marred themselves, than have these chiefs
of the capitalist jungle, gouged and torn
with pointed worries and with hooking scorn.

Here anxiety has almost split a cheek; and here
suspicion digs trenches round the eyes;
here arrogance has filed the lips like blades;
and here indulgence pulled them out like tongues;
and greed has sliced and envy burned
and graft has squeezed and flattery turned.

And do they know their doom? Out of the jungle to be driven?
The jungle of Capital is being cleared;
in Russia first and soon to thrive the world.

In the morning, following their razor's traces
do they see the omens on their faces?

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

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HOW THE WASTE LAND BECAME A FLOWER GARDEN

Philip Rahv

TOWARD THE END OF THE PRECEDING DECADE Mr. Joseph Wood Krutch put himself at the head of the "waste land" school of thought by summarizing its fatigued self-dramatization in a notable volume called *The Modern Temper*. His main point was that the heroic and tragic attitudes were things of the past, for man no longer believed in his greatness and importance. Science and the advance of technology had done away with the "Tragic Fallacy" of former ages—that "Tragic Faliacy" which lent man a sense of dignity—and which ultimately depended upon some form of religious belief. As for Communism, that was but a silly faith in happiness as a concomittant of physical well-being; for his part he insisted that the fundamental maladjustments were "not between man and society, but between the human spirit and the natural universe."

Art also seemed a lost cause to Krutch. In this bleak universe it could be nothing else but the *contemplation of negation*. In *Art and Experience,* his subsequent book, he wrote: "Zola, Baudelaire, and Ibsen; Gissing, Hardy and Dostoevsky—these men, hardly less than Darwin and Freud, have disillusioned mankind with the universe and with itself." Incapable of achieving a self-justifying vision, the literature of our times appeared to him impotent in the face of humanity's need for a self-justifying image.

By the end of 1933, however we find Krutch radiating sweetness and light. Unable to "weep Fate from its determined course," as an old poet once put it, he decided to try cheering it off. All at once, the artist, whom he formerly saw slinking about and peering into dark corners, is seen as the incarnation of joy and dalliance. In his own words: "The chief function of fiction and drama and poetry . . . . is not to improve society any more than it is to improve morals. Its purpose, rather, *is to make existence tolerable to those who are compelled to accept Things As They Are.*" (*Literature and Utopia,* The Nation, Oct. 18, 1933. Italics mine.)

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But Krutch is too wily a sophist to execute such a daring about-face merely by addressing an inspirational appeal to writers; instead he does what Max Eastman, politically degenerate and steeped in venom, is fond of attributing to Marx and Lenin—he reads his idea into the objective nature of art, thus "discovering" its eternal "purpose." His whole pattern of thought here is cast in the mold of teleology, expressing the typical inverted clericalism of idealist criticism. The result, of course, is a special counter-revolutionary category: artist. Whether starving or sated his purpose is to draw our attention to the silver lining on every dark cloud. True, the world is full of misery and chaos, but after all, the artist who ponders about this rejoices in these calamaties, for they furnish him with the material "out of which tragedies are written, and the contemplation of tragedy is one of the purest, one of the most human joys there is." The revolutionist is busy proving that "Things As They Are" can no longer be borne, while the artist "is busily proving with his songs and his tales that it can."

Krutch is certain that Marxism dooms art, and he tries to prove it by quoting an alleged conversation with Sergei Eisenstein, the Soviet film director, who explained to him that by making the film a weapon in the proletarian class struggle he was helping to destroy it, since as soon as the aims of this struggle are realized, there will be no further need for art. For at that time, with perfection reigning and no unsatisfied desires left, art, being essentially a compensation, will wither away.

Needless to say, this idea of the classless desert of art is at loggerheads with the basic principles of Marxism. And it is very illuminating to observe how Krutch, like many of his colleagues, makes use of distorted dialectics to attack the real dialectic. He quotes Eisenstein's conversation, but it never seems to occur to these people that the only way to find out what Marxism is about is to study it in its original context. It is absurd to speak of "perfection" in characterizing the classless society. Change the Marxist recognizes as the sole absolute, and in the classless society there will be new contradictions and new struggles—with this difference, however: these new contradictions and struggles will develop on an incomparably higher level. For it is then, with the extinction of the fight for individual existence, that man will for the first time in history actually enter into his human estate.

To speak of art in general, in the abstract, and then to tack onto this abstraction an eternal "purpose," is just as chimerical as to speak about an abstract man isolated from a specific form of society and a specific

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class within that society. And this is exactly what Krutch is doing, as the one concept involves the other. It suffices to contrast his conception of art as *optimism* with living artistic practice, not to mention his earlier views, to see to what senile straits has class logic has brought him. The brutal naturalism of modern literature and the atmospheres of disgust and nihilism which it recreates, are too well known to need further demonstration. As to the literature of the past, its affirmative or negative qualities differ with their specific social and class genesis. But nowhere in history do we find these Krutchean centers of literary light that impel the writer to shout Hallelujah regardless of the particular social complex wherein he functions.

Let us examine his point about tragedy. In *The Modern Temper* he said that it is impossible for modern writers to create tragedy, for they do not believe in the greatness of man, and hence cannot make his "greatness compensate for his frustration." But in *Literature and Utopia* the modern writer suddenly becomes capable of seeing life as significantly and harmoniously as presumably only the ancient and feudal creators could see it. The truth is that Krutch is wrong on both counts. Except for the period of bourgeois class rise, the creation of tragedy is beyond the capacity of bourgeois art. What is tragedy? If we rid ourselves of the fetishizing of its externals, of its historical barnacles (such as the mechanics of formal catastrophe in the plot, the grand manner, dramatic verse forms, etc.), we find that tragedy consists primarily in the *signification* of reality. Proletarian literature, because it expresses the movement of vast social forces, the making of *positive* history, the suffering and heroism of multitudes, is indeed capable of that vital affirmation which is the essence of the tragic. It can be produced by those creators who are able not merely to state the gigantic contradictions of contemporary life, but also to resolve them. The signification of a revolutionary class is of necessity kinetic, impelling it to the disruption of the social equilibrium and to the fulfilment of its only possible emotional release—action. But signification is impossible to a class rolling down the incline of history. Its representatives in literature cannot fathom the heroic, and the principal problems of the epoch, which they are unable to solve, they cannot even pose except with the "wrong consciousness." When Krutch laments the death of heroes, he is really lamenting the death of bourgeois heroes. The workers have their heroes—not the individual as hero, but men like Lenin and Stalin, Dimitrov and Thaelmann, Liebknecht and Luxembourg, the Altona Communists and John Scheer, Wesley Everest and Harry Simms. The suffering

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of such a hero would not reconcile the spectator or reader to capitalism but would rather heighten the significance of the cause inspiring such fortitude and nobility. In the present era only that is heroic which embodies the struggle of the producing masses against their plunderers. The individualist hero is no longer truly real, for reality belongs only to that which is necessary. There is and there can be no affirmation in bourgeois literature today. And when theoreticians do *invent* a modern bourgeois affirmation, it inevitably turns into a rationale of fascism. Thus in Mr. J. Donald Adams' hands a conception of art as optimism is almost automaticaly transfigured into a storm-trooper showing off his biceps (see his front-page review of Paul Engle's book of poems, *American Song,* in the *New York Times,* Section 5, July 18, 1934). Clearly, the class struggle has a wonderful way of filling with an immediate political content the seemingly innocent speculations of scholars and theoreticians, even literary theoreticians.

At bottom, however, Krutch's definition of the purpose of art in general is an admission of the function of contemporary bourgeois art. What we really have here is a recognition of this function and a crude attempt to counter the Marxist exposure of it by wiping out the particular historical context in which it operates, thus making it the property of all art. Bourgeois art does indeed try to reconcile the masses to capitalism, yet by applying his chloroforming technique, Krutch manages to obscure this fatal meaning. The artist ostensibly makes existence "tolerable to those who are compelled to accept Things As They Are." But the plain fact is—as a glance at any newpaper will show—that economic conditions compel the masses to revolt against, not to accept, things as they are. In aesthetics this compulsion to revolt is proven in practice by the emergence of revolutionary art, which obviously cannot and does not conform to to Krutch's definition of artistic direction and purpose. To this actual breach in his theory Krutch, of course, has only one answer to make to him: non bourgeois art is tantamount to no art at all.

It would, none the less, be the grossest error to imagine that by thus defining the social effect of bourgeois art in general, we have exhausted our critical relation to it. This is what is being done by the "left" doctrinaires, whose over-simplifications and gestures of curt dismissal from the viewpoint of ideology and creative method alike, give the critical reactionaries an opportunity to confuse the issues. While as a broad generalization it is true, for example, that bourgeois literature justifies the status quo, it is also true that this process takes the most contradic-

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tory forms, sometimes even to the extent of undermining its own class foundation.

Bourgeois literature is by no means homogeneous. The central cleavage one notes in it is the cleavage between commercial and intellectual art. It is the commercial writers who command the largest market and who affect the masses directly; they are the open instrument of propertied class interest in letters. On the subjective side this is reflected in the moronic level of this body of writing and its utter lack of integrity—in dealing with mass propaganda the bourgeoisie takes no chances. The literature representing the advanced intellectuals, however, by and large presents a somewhat different condition. Here we are not confronted with shallow optimism and an open cash-valuation of life, but with an art that articulates despair, that slashes certain forms of philistinism, and that even indulges in virulent social criticism (usually not stated in class terms, but deflected through various crooked mirrors). It is clear that this negative art, replete with the ideological moments of petty-bourgeois class vacillation, both retards and accelerates the radicalization of intellectuals. There are literally thousands of people to whom this negative art, by immersing them in an atmosphere of disillusionment, served as an introduction and a stimulus to social insurgence, and at the same time there are thousands whom it insulated from such activity. Hence no analysis of this art can lay claim to Marxism unless it proceeds from a grasp of its historical connections, class moods and movements.

This middle class literature of despair—from Gustave Flaubert to E. E. Cummings—is indeed a protest against the bourgeois way of life that fell short of becoming conscious of its real motivation. Its source does not lie in a mystical maladjustment "between the human spirit and the natural universe" but in the corrupt state of a parasitic social system. Writers attacked the philistinism of the modern life-process, but failed to challenge the predatory social order which is the matrix of this philistinism. By reason of this crucial frustration, their criticism of society went amiss; it could not strike the rockbottom of class reality. In the long run these literary iconoclasts proceeded to *idealize* the negations they had established, and ended up by capitulating to various aesthetic dogmas. Take Joyce's aesthetic ideal, the perfect stasis, which is a good example of idealized negation. The perfect stasis, Joyce tell us, "awakens or ought to awaken . . . an aesthetic stasis, an ideal pity or an ideal pity or an ideal terror, a stasis called forth, prolonged and a last dissolved by the rhythm of beauty." Stuart Gilbert defines its psychological effect as "arresting the mind and

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raising it above desire and loathing." From the initial social resentment in *Dubliners* Joyce developed toward a demoralized consciousness of social impotence and hence toward a desire for liberation from the social. The result is a sinking into imaginative life, regarded as the self-contained domain of art: thus art becomes a barrier between his disgust with reality and his impulse to change it. The perfect stasis is the idealized negation, which other writers paralleled with similar dogmas of passivity. Proust dissolving his material perceptions of ruling class life in his theory of subjective time, which negates history; Hemingway's gravitation toward the purely sensual; Faulkner's erasure of specific conditions of decay in favor of a static melodrama of evil far evil's sake; Cummings' view of art as "a minute bit of personal feeling" (his most recent utterance—"reason let others flaunt and realness wear/strip with me to alive or actual i"); Robinson Jeffers' repudiation of mankind, his longing for the return of the "old, lonely immortal splendor" of the earth, the whole gamut of his suffocating cosmism—all these are instances of idealized negations, of insurgence locked in the cage of philosophic idealism. Thus arrested in its development, this literary revolt becomes a brake on class consciousness. It is in this sense, though we do not discard its values as a partial negation of existing society, that we understand the bourgeois character of this literary revolt.

It is only in times of intense class struggle that this dualism in negative modern art is sundered and broken. Then the sharpened class relations break the fetters of aesthetic and metaphysical consolation and the writer either becomes aware of the real conditioning of his despair, or moves toward an explicit reactionary position. The contrast, for example, between Krutch and Malcolm Cowley under the conditions of the present crisis will clarify the point.

And since the Marxian affirmation attracts writers, bourgeois criticism must needs counteract it with an affirmation of its own, even if it be the hymeneal halo of Mr. Harold Bell Wright and Madame Kathleen Norris. This strategy, of course, comprises a critical objectification of the rapid rate at which all bourgeois art, no matter how aesthetic, is being transformed into a conscious support of its class. Krutch emerges with his gospel of optimism as the eternal property of art precisely when despair becomes more and more a probable stepping-stone to social revolt. This is how the waste land becomes a flower garden and the croaking of the frogs in the marshes is drowned out by the voices of pure love and magnates of capital.

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ST. LOUIS IDYLL

J. S. Balch

"Here they come!" someone shouted.

"Where? Where?" the youngsters stopped running and singing in the streets and stretched on tiptoes looking westward. The thousands massed patiently for hours on curbs and corners climbed one another's backs to look.

"Where?" they shouted.

"Where?"

A band began to play on the roof of Loew's State Theatre. The waiting people, shocked by the sudden crash of sound, looked up. A searchlight illuminated the faces of John Barrymore and Joan Crawford flapping on the wind in twentyfoot frames. An arrow pointed at John said: should he have done it? An arrow pointed at Joan said: what was it she did? The faces of the players above bulged pastily in the searchlight glare behind brass instruments.

"For he's a jolly good fellow," the band played.

"Here they come!" the people shouted.

The mounted police, riding back the sidewalk overflow, with horsehoofs rearing, came first. The Zouaves came next with turbans and redcoats, every man a sixfooter. A tightly trousered batonmajor, prancing like a dancer, led them. Then came a band of turks with fifes and drums.

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here!"

The people took up the song. The plutocrats and plutas from the sixteenth stories of the hotels down to the newsboy and policeman-crowded lobbies, the waitresses in the restaurants, the thousands of little children, the gangs of young toughs, all sang Hail, hail, the gang's all here.

A voice through an invisible loudspeaker roared above drumthunder: the Mist Prophet's parade, ladeez and genmen, is now about to pass the point of honor after having come along a nine mile route of city streets into the do-owntown district. His Mysterious Majestee, comes but once a year to his good city through the courtesy of (here followed a stentorian list of all the business houses which had invested in his coming,

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a confidential review of their virtues and a man-to-man solicitation for patronage from the discriminating citizenry) . . .

An overalled Negro staggered beneath a legend: The Pilgrim Fathers. Now followed grimy men in overalls who gravely led teams of oxen pulling the float. Cameramen on high wooden stands bent low and fumbled with black folds of cloth and shot white rabbits of smoke thickly skyscraperward.

"Lift me, daddy," the children begged, "lift me, daddy, I can't see!"

On the float the Pilgrims, a group of grayclad puritans in tipsyred masks—patricians out of Who's Who—leaned against a purple rocket flaring sailship grounded on a rock coast and blew kisses.

Men in dungarees followed the float, holding up wires.

. . . the hotels, the shops, the restaurants, the theayters, the factories, ladeez and genmen, along the line of march have taken this opportunity presented them by his Gracious Highness in whose fortunes after all, ladeez and genmen, not only they but we-e, the pee-eeple, when all is said and done, also share, with dividends not only material, ah! if you look around you! the shining happy faces, the honest working people. . . .

An untoward incident happened now, one of many such this evening. A man was passing out handbills. A foot-policeman, on the lookout for Reds since the City Hall battle this morning, spotting him, jolted his way through the crowd, twisted the distributor's arms and started to drag him off. Mounted police rode spurring. Horsehoofs reared, women screamed. Men hard against women from behind availed themselves of the general crowding and excitement to press with thighs and fingers.

A young man and woman, hurrying to no destination, dodged down the street. The man, speaking low, brushed strips of toilet paper from the girl's furred schoulders.

"I don't understand you, Frankie," she was saying, "I don't see why you should want to throw up your job for such a reason."

"They gave me a five dollar raise," Frankie was saying, "because I fixed a paper that showed where we could beautify the city by throwing out sixty families down on Third Street and tear up the ground. What a joke! We had money and pull and those colored people hadn't. No more nice going, Frankie. I tell you, I'm tired of playing the side that always pays."

A derisive cheer went up from sympathizers as a policeman, leaning over too far with his club, fell from his horse.

"Look at that," Frankie said, "goddamit, I'm ashamed of myself!"

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. . . It is estimated that fifteen thousand outoftowners from all the valley states are visiting our city now at the time of its highest glory, the carnival parade. Of course, this is far below pre-depression figures which sometimes ran four times as high, but what's the difference! Forget the past! Down today and up, you know what I mean, ladeez and genmen! Oho! here comes the next float, the Declaration of Independence and who knows. Maybe, to use Hoover's phrase, 'the corner's turning'—with Roosevelt! Maybe we'll be singing. . . .

"I'll tell yuh," the newsboy said, "it wuz better a few years ago when de cops let yes sellslappers. Yuh cud sell dem slappers ten cents apiece, make six cents profit. When yuh slapped some fatass gal on de bimbo wid one of dem, boy! she knew what it felt like to be married."

An overalled Negro passed. The men had walked far, the legend drooped. "Hey, shine," a man on the float behind called, "hold it up."

The signbearer straightened, grinning. The legend said: Pioneers. The men in overalls and the plodding oxen came next. The float followed.

A log cabin stood in a clearing. Two women leaned on axes. Three men wearing beards blew kisses. A Red Indian, chained by a foot to a log, jumped up and down and scratched his hide like a monkey.

"Hooray," the crowd shouted.

"Hooray fuh the Prophet."

"Hooray fuh Roosevelt."

"Hooray."

"Boo."

The ladies in ermines in the upperstory windows of Hotel Statler thought it all too funny. They shook and threw kisses. The Red Indian drew an imaginary arrow from an imaginary quiver, planted a kiss on it, set it to a heartshaped gilded bow and shot it with exaggerated monkey-motions at a blonde in shiny silk straddling a thirdstory balcony railing. She caught and hugged it to her breast. Her escort, an abdominal oldster in tweeds, solemnly clapped his hands.

. . . the American legion band is marching by. Look at those boys strut. In red with fancy red overseas caps. Who remembers how in a time like this, in a time of gravest crisis. . . .

A man in a dirty shirt made a nasty noise with his mouth. He said, "aint they purty!"

Another man in a dirty shirt said, "Don't you like it?"

"No, I don't."

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"Well," the first man rocked on his heels, "ever hear of the A.E.F.?"

"So what?"

"And the *B.* E. F. Ever hear of that?"

Confused, "Sure."

"Well, buddy, I was in both of them outfits and I know what I kin do—but it won't be fighting dirtyshirt stiffs like myself anymore."

. . . certainly it is true that the eyes of the whole city, the whole state, nay, the country and the whole world are on us tonight. If the ideals on which this country and this community were founded and, the fear of God, if it means something. . . .

"Poipa, poipa," the newsboy shouted, "all about the City-Hall fight this morning."

Came Washington at Home. The ivytwined white columns, the latticed doors, the colored bulbs how cunningly displayed, drew great applause. Washington in a powdered wig and silken kneebreeches pointed with a tiny wand at the words, rolled back on a barrelled tablet, For the People, By the People, Of the People. Martha presided at the cakes. A group of statesmen dressed as Washington threw kisses. A woman held up to Washington a shivering thin baby. It screamed as Washington waved a white handkerchief and blew kisses.

"Didn't Abe Lincoln say dat," a policeman said, "he came later, didn't he?"

"Say what?"

. . . tomorrow night, ladeez and genmen, is really the big night. For it is then that the Mist Prophet gives the annual ball to his people before disappearing for a year into the mysterious realm whence he came. Who the Mist Prophet is, nobody knows.

"Get your handbills here, fellow-workers," a ragged man urged, "all about the City Hall demonstration this morning! all about the fight against starvation!"

Looking down, "you can make your choice, Frankie," the girl said, "the job and me, or—"

"Don't be like that," he said, "damn if you don't talk like a book, damn if you don't."

She wrenched her hand loose from his and walked down the street. He began to follow her but stopped.

It was turning cold, he noticed. The parade had passed by now. Music could be faintly heard as it turned north on Broadway to the stables. People dispersed, shivering, to buses, cars and streetcars. Some

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paper, torn to resemble bonbons, still fluttered down from upperstory windows. And it began to drizzle. Frankie turned up his coat-collar and walked slowly down the street. He began at last to run, going faster and faster.

Handbills whitened the wet street and he stooped in flight, taking one without knowing. On the corner, men seemed to be fighting. He became aware of shouts, police-whistles shrilling. Mechanically, he pushed through fleshmasses, through faces suddenly hurtling. He staggered as a man fell against him and slid to the ground. A hand caught his shoulder. spinning him like a wheel. He saw a face red as copper, a lifted club. Suddenly aware, he began to strike out.

"Quit it, you bastard," the heavens shrieked.

"I'll kill you," he moaned, "I'll kill you!"

They were dragging him, they were tearing at his armpits. They were lifting, they were pounding! mauling! stomping! pulling him toward, up to, in through the patrolwagon door. He kicked and screamed, sprinting in air, but he was in at last. Half-reeling, half-walking, falling over, under, between bodies, he found himself somehow seated. The steel door, crisscrossed with iron bars, clanged shut.

"How you making out, comrade?" a voice asked.

"I'm all right," Frankie said.

The wagon started. A boy's voice sobbed softly.

"Scared, kid?"

"It's my first time, Steve," the boy said. "I wonder what my ma will think when I don't come home tonight."

"We'll soon be out, kid," Steve said, "we'll soon—"

"That's all right," the boy said.

Steve grinned, throwing back his head. He began to sing:

"Uhrize! ye prizners of starva-shun!"

He sang as though in pain, as though in joy. One by one, lifting battered heads, his companions joined in.

"Uhrize! ye wret-ched of the earth!"

The desperate strange words rose through the gray thin air, through the swishing rain running like ratfeet down the street. Pedestrians, hiding from the storm coming up, turned to listen.

Frankie listened.

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NO CREDIT

Whether dinner was pleasant, with the windows lit by gunfire, and no one disagreed; or whether, later, we argued in the park, and there was a touch of vomit-gas in the evening air;

whether we found a greater, deeper, more perfect love, by courtesy of Camels, over NBC; whether the comics amused us, or the newspapers carried a hunger death, and published a whitehouse prayer for mother's day;

whether the bills were paid or not, whether or not we had our doubts, whether we spoke our minds at Joe's, and the receipt said "Not Redeemable," and the cash-register rang up "No Sale,"

whether the truth was then, or later, or whether the best had already gone—

Nevetheless, we know; as every turn is measured; as every unavoidable risk is known;

as nevertheless, the flesh grows old, dies, dies in its only life, is gone; the reflection goes from the mirror; as the shadow, of even a Communist, is gone from the wall;

as nevertheless, the current is thrown and the wheels revolve; and nevertheless, as the word is spoken and the wheat grows tall and the ships sail on—

None but the fool is paid in full; none but the broker, none but the scab is certain of profit;

the sheriff alone may attend a third degree in formal attire; alone, the academy artists multiply in dignity as a trooper's bayonet guards the door;

only Steve, the side-show robot, knows content; only Steve, the mechanical man in love with a photo-electric beam, remains aloof; only Steve, who sits and smokes or stands in salute, is secure;

Steve, whose shoebutton eyes are blind to terror, whose painted ears are deaf to appeal, whose welded breast will never be slashed by bullets, whose armature soul can hold no fear.

KENNETH FEARING

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THREE GENERATIONS

Wallace Phelps

THE SO-CALLED LOST GENERATION, so effectively described by Malcolm Cowley in *Exile's Return,** has been the most sensational of literary generations in the United States. It arose at a time of unprecedented expansion, when artists could satisfy their desire to flaunt society and yet reap the material benefits which a prosperous middle class could offer. The post-war fever and disillusion fed its talent for gestures and "esthetic" flights. But in the end this very disillusion, and, to be sure, the deepening of class grooves, shattered the chic of the lost generation, and, by forcing a questioning of assumptions, split most of its members into "lefts" and "rights" (though some, of course, like Gertrude Stein, had gained enough momentum to be little affected by changes in social forces or in critical assumptions).

Literary generations in America have never been so homogeneous nor so clearly defined as they have been in Europe, where the "school" was always the thing. Probably this is due to the fact that our traditions in general, and particularly our cultural traditions, have changed too rapidly and have sprawled too widely to have achieved any considerable unity and continuity. The group of writers, which included Dreiser, Anderson, Lewis, Robinson and Sandburg, was the nearest approximation of a literary generation immediately preceding the writers who found that they were lost. And the differences between them are too patent to require emphasis. What seems to characterize this earlier group is a firm setting in American soil, and a social interest. Some were regional, others national; but most of them were trying to catch the spin of social life. And in many of them could be found the symptoms of capitalist contradiction and disintegration. They were generally free of sophistication and verve, almost to the point of provincialism. It was a period of muckraking, of iconoclasm and satire, and extreme literalism of method. The "autonomous," speculative capacities of the mind had not been dis-

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covered. It was the nearest thing to the Zola period in France that America had produced.

The outlook of the lost generation, like its French forerunners, the Symbolists, Cubists, Dadaists and Surrealists, was indirectly a repudiation of the Dreiser period. The protoype of the new generation was Paul Valery, to whom writing was a form of speculative research. Some writers, like the *transition* group, adapted this principle to the linguistic methods of Joyce. Others aped for a while the extreme "detached" techniques of Dadaism and Surrealism. And Eliot and a few disciples changed the existing social derivations of literature by going back to earlier English traditions and to French Symbolism for more generalized symbols of contemporary life. However, only a few of the more important figures, like Eliot and Stein, (who really belong to a slightly earlier period) persisted for any length of time in any of these methods. The return of the exiles marked the general return to more direct equivalnts of the American scene. The period turned out to be one of transition, one of infiltration of new currents, one of cosmopolitanization.

That this generation is not merely a chronological one is seen in the number of writers who came of age at this time but who remained on the fringe or were only remotely influenced by the emigré movement. But, however remote the influence, it served to break the line of literary tradition. Important novels were no lenger written in the manner of Dreiser and Anderson, nor poetry in that of Robinson or Frost. And criticism became more urbane, more subtle. Faulkner, for example, became neither Dadaist nor modernist of any kind, but his native stories of the South have a verbal and psychological sequence reminiscent of Joyce. The point is that this generation succeeded not only in introducing new ways of handling new subjects, but also in assimilating many significant ideas of the period. The apparent objectivity of scientific method, the relativity of time to motion, (in fiction, to action), the idealistic denial of immediate realities or their submersion in eternal verities or symbols, the sense of autonomous psychological sequence (as in Freud), are a few of the ideas which, in one way or another, entered into literature.

At present the lost generation has slipped into literary history. The last stubborn remnants are petering out in Paris. The individual writers, like Cowley himself, who has written their epitaph, though retaining their equipment, are shifting toward the alternative forces—Communism and Fascism. Some few still pretend an impartiality. Beyond question, the most talented and those who always showed the greatest clarity in

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their writing are identifying themselves with the struggle of the workers. It seems almost natural that Allen Tate, for example, whose poetry and criticism is so turgid, should have receded into the reactionary hybrid of Harvard humanism and Southern feudalism.

While the exiles were cavorting in France, and sporting, on their return, their new accomplishments, an undercurrent of revolutionary literature was being built by a few confident pioneers. The work of writers like Freeman, Gold and Kunitz is familiar enough not to require summarizing. But what has not been adequately emphasized is that in general they belong to the same generation as Cowley, Communigs, Hemingway, and the others. After several years of partial eclipse, the swing to the left has made of these older revolutionary writers the Marxian teachers of the leftward moving writers, not only of the lost generation but also of older writers like Anderson (during his short lurch to the left). But just at the time when the tempo of revolution has brought to the fore the forces which Gold, for instance, represents, a new generation of revolutionary writers is rising.

Much of our uncertainty and experiment in proletarian writing, aside from the obvious cause, youth, has been produced by this literary anomaly of two generations being confronted with a single task. The older revolutionary writers, for the most part, and with qualifications of course, never really passed through the literary period which their "lost" contemporaries introduced. They side-stepped it in order to carry the line of revolution forward. And the strain and the exigencies of pioneering kept them from assimilating the literary spirit of the twenties. To say this is not to disparage their work, but to praise their integrity and power, Nevertheless, the spirit of the twenties is part of our heritage, and many of the younger revolutionary generations are acutely conscious of this. Though, to be exact, we are far from possessing homogeneity in literary derivation and outlook, and are divided on many basic literary questions.

The job of our generation is to tie these threads, to use whatever heritage there is at our disposal for our revolutionary tasks. But it is the revolutionary thread which gives the color to our pattern. By participation in workers' struggles we both help to spin this thread and gain an intimate knowledge of the new human relations the revolutionary movement is forming. We are widening the revolutionary tradition because our material is enlarging and our audience is expanding. And the added perspective time has given us is enabling us to assimilate many currents which

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the revolutionary pioneers in the intensity of their struggle had to ignore.

The latest literary generation may be called the proletarian generation, because it is the only unified group among the younger writers, and because most of its members are related in one way or another to the labor movement, to the Communist Party, and to the literature growing out of these forces. Besides, this generation is coming up at a time when the air is charged with discussions about proletarian literature, when this question is the axis of most significant writing today. I do not mean to imply that all these writers come from proletarian families, nor that all are creating unmistakable proletarian literature, but that their activity marks a period in which revolutionary literature is the most significant and strongest literary current.

Most of us come from petty-bourgeois homes; some, of course, from proletarian ones. But the gravity of the economic crisis has levelled most of us (and our families) to a meager, near-starvation existence. Opportunities for cashing-in are gone, and we have no illusions about their return. The kind of reputation which used to bring jobs as editors, lecturers, and readers in publishing houses, holds no lure for us, because those jobs have been whittled down to a few sinecures for stand-patters and tight-rope walkers. The bourgeoisie does not want us, and we could not accept the double-dealing which these jobs require. All of us have worked, for some time at least, in factories, in stores, and at odd jobs. Some have had better paying jobs as teachers. But we are all in the same leaky boat now.

Our economic experiences have stripped us of waverings, of side-glances toward prosperous avenues. Our aims have been linked to the proletariat. Hence many of the proletarian generation have not had to make any *transition* to a revolutionary outlook; and for those who have, the adjustment has not been so difficult as for the older writers. Whatever transition has been necessary, has been due to our consciousness of heritage. And our problem has been to use this heritage in our search for methods of recreating revolutionary experience. There have been many differences and conflicts among us, based somewhat on individual gifts and temperament, but mainly on fundamental theoretical and even class differences. But, for the most part, we have had to make no jumps; and we have not had to give up anything.

The relation of the proletarian generation to the preceding ones hinges on the attitude we take to our creative problems. It has been pointed out that the thin line of revolutionary writers who are trying

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to assimilate the whole past and to integrate the strata in our audience, is flanked by "leftists" on one side, and rightists on the other. The "leftists" repudiate the bourgeois heritage, and fall into primitive, oversimplified and pseudo-popular rewrites of political ideas and events. Since a complete repudiation of the past is impossible in practice, they really continue the tradition of primitive, "popular" writing. The rightists are principally those who have not completed their transition, and who seek to assimilate the methods and sensibility of writers like Joyce asd Eliot without a clear sense of the revolutionary purposes to which these influences should be bent. Unless a writer strikes boldly in a revolutionary direction, this "influence" and "assimilation" is dangerously near imitation.

Since all critical judgments are rooted in an immediate outlook and in some specific creative practice, it is impossible to speak for the entire proletarian generation in commenting on its attitude to the past. An attempt to steer this course between "leftism" and rightism will be implicit in every subsequent judgment.

Since the last generation was, in a sense, a swing away from the preceding sociological one, we find ourselves returning to some of the more direct and linear methods of men like Dreiser. As the later novels of Dos Passos have shown, a tangential treatment of characters and incidents which are so causally bound up with the whole make-up of modern life can never be entirely successful. In this respect, *The Land of Plenty,* the stories of Whittaker Chambers, or the poetry of Alfred Hayes, mark a break with the oblique treatment of, let us say, Cummings or Hemingway. We are more aware of the naturalists and realists than was the last generation. But our approach to them is colored, nevertheless, by the lens of the intervening literary epoch.

T. S. Eliot is one of the strongest literary influences on us. This is so probably, because he is the only really important poet of the immediate past. And this is an impression which no writer, however revolutionary, can entirely escape. Though not properly a member of the lost generation, Eliot represents essentially the same literary milieu. In his poetry, however reactionary its ultimate implications may be, Eliot has perfected a new idiom and tighter rhythms for expressing many prevailing moods and perceptions. A proletarian *Eliot* would, of course, be an anomaly, but many of our younger poets—Funaroff, Spector, Rolfe, for instance—have often successfully employed some elements of Eliot's sessibility. Occasionally, however, the measure of their revolutionary failure lay in the fact that the poem, as a whole, did not possess a new sensibility and

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a new idiom adequate to the revolutionary experience beyond the horizon of Eliot's verse.

The actual literary achievement of the lost generation is far less than the noise and drama which attended it. It probably did produce, as Cowley says, more writers of talent than any preceding one in America. But no single figure has loomed large enough to persist as a strong literary influence. In most specific instances, their methods are linked too closely with subjects and ideas which we have long repudiated. But the fact remains that a good part of their sensibility has entered into our approach to literature. Detailed anlysis would be beyond the scope of this essay; but two examples might suffice. Hart Crane's use of the industrial symbol and the sea symbol stem from a desire to unify what was to Crane the splintered fragments of modern life. In his verse this resulted in a concentration of machine-imagery and sea-imagery which gave it the quality of fore-shortened symbolism. The method of Crase could not lend itself to a revolutionary mood or incident. It is too jagged, too steep, too autonomous. Yet Crane was much closer to industrial patterns and rhythms of today than was Frost or Robinson or Jeffers. Hence Crane's sensibility is more likely to be part of our sense of poetic line and image, and of the quality of events, than is that of the older poets. Similarly, the criticism of Eliot, Burke, Cowley, for example, is essentially a reaction to the impressionistic criticism of preceding periods. Their essays on literature strive for objectivity (as opposed to gush), for specifically literary values, and for a scientific relation of literary to philosophical and other non-literary ideas. They have not succeeded; often these aims are no more than a pretense skillfully camouflaged with fine writing. And, for the most part, (with the exception of some of the recent work of those who have accepted Marxism), their premises are false. Nevertheless, they have left us with some impressive judgments and some good writing. But what is more important, these aims which they have not realized have been adapted to our own critical standards. Within the confines of our class position, we feel that our Marxian assumptions equip us gradually to effect these aims in our criticism.

In a very concrete sense the Marxian idea of synthesis is here exemplified. The lost generation negated many of the values of the preceding one, though both operated in the same framework of capitalist culture. In rejecting this culture the proletarian generation effects a higher synthesis of both earlier periods. (Though, of course, our range of assimilation is by no means limited to the immediately preceding literary epochs.)

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The proletarian generation has not yet fulfilled its promises. Malcolm Cowley has been able to write. "This wartime generation has undoubtedly produced more writers of distinction than the generation preceding it . . . and probably more than will be produced by the generation which follows." The maturing of the proletarian generation is slowly puncturing this prophecy. Besides, the development of a proletarian literature and criticism ushers in new critical standards. How the work of the lost generation will fare in the Marxian judgements of future generations cannot be entirely predicted. At present, however, much of the fine writing of the older critics is closed to us, because such writing requires a fundamental irresponsibility. An idea could always have been shaped to a sentence—and who would object? But much of this fine writing is already tasting flat to us as we see how irresolute and empty are many of the ideas embodied in it.

There are great tasks ahead of us. I have merely touched on our successes and failures, and our conflicts over theory and method. From one angle a literary generation represents a relation to other generations. An understanding of the technical and social aspects of this relation helps to clarify our own tasks and controversies. These, in turn, will have to be analysed in relation to the trends within revolutionary literature, particularly in relation to the thin line of maturing revolutionary writers who, in steering their way through mechanism on one side, and opportunism on the other, are clearing the road ahead for a great proletarian art.

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THE MOTHER

Gertrude Diamant

THE MOTHER GREW THIN AND HAGGARD, as if she were giving of her own body to feed the children. Her flesh lay shadowed between the bones, her breasts hung dry and slack, with futile nipples pointing to the ground. All things nagged at the mother's body. At night her husband seized it in his strong hands, and worked an angry passion on it. The mother's body was a rusted machine, too weak and tired for his power. By day the children were at her. When they were hungry the children came to the mother and beat at her thighs with their fists, and pulled at her skirt. They looked up at her, crying, with angry, distorted faces; and their eyes seemed to say: "Why did you give us life, why did you give us hungry mouths, and nothing to fill them with?" The eyes of the children watched the mother as they looked up, reproachfully and yet slyly; for after all she could work miracles, and at any moment, from her hands or her breasts, food might be forthcoming.

When her husband had been out of work for two years, and the mother was in despair, the other women in the house came to her with this advice: "Why don't you have another baby?" they said. "Your luck will change then. God will provide for it, God always brings luck to a new baby." Then the mother permitted her husband's seed to take root in her, and sent the thin sap of her body into the center of her being, so that the new life could grow and come out into the world, where God could see it. The child grew heavy within her, and it was with difficulty that she bore herself upright. The child was a sweet and bitter weight within her body. But the mother kept thinking: "They are right. When the new baby comes, everything will change. God will see the new baby, and take care of it."

Three days after it was delivered, the baby died. For three days it threshed about with its arms and legs, gasping, struggling to swim in the light and air of this world. Then it died, and they put it into a plain coffin, no bigger than a grocer's carton. The other women came in to see it. They shook their heads and crossed themselves, and stood

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for a long time staring down into the coffin. They saw the baby's face, small and compact as a fist, unopened as a bud; and as the women stared at it they were filled with pity, and also with a feeling of bewilderment. When a grown person dies you feel that even in death he is still aware of things, and knows the kind of coffin he lies in, and takes pride in the homage of his friends. His body is not so strange, because the memory of life is still in it. But the new baby had lived such a short while, its body seemed to show such indifference to its own death, such a strange, still remoteness from everything that went on in the room, that the women were baffled as they looked at it, and could not even cry for something that had once been alive.

On the second night that the baby lay dead there was a great shouting and screaming in the tenement. The women woke from their sleep and listened. They heard the shrill cries of the mother, the father's angry voice, and the whimpering of the children. It was a shame, they thought, that the father couldn't contain his anger, even on a night when the baby lay dead. Next morning they asked the mother: "What was it, what was he shouting for last night?" But the mother sat at the table, with her arms stretched out before her, palms upturned. Now and then she moved her head and stared out of the window. The trees in the backyard lifted their early spring leaves, green and feathery in the sunlight; and on the walls of the tenement across the way the shadows of flying birds fell . . . shadows straight and sudden, like falling leaves. The mother stared at the trees and the sudden shadow. She kept her thin arms stretched out before her, the hardened palms turned up, as if something was written on them, and she was offering it for everyone to read. "What was it?" they urged her. "What was he shouting for last night?" The mother would not speak, but this is what happened.

When she saw that the new baby was dead, the mother was angry. She lay in bed, thinking how the new baby had tricked her. It had fed itself on her body, and wrenched her limbs with the pain of birth. And now it demanded a coffin and a burial plot, now it was only a small dead thing, demanding more than the living children. She felt her breasts. They were hard and firm again, the fulness of milk in them hurt her. She thought of the other children, living mouths crying to be slaked, mouths to relieve the pain of her breasts, to suck out their fulness. Then the mother rose and leaned over the boy. She stuffed the ripe nipple into his mouth, but the boy would not be suckled. His lips

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vomited the nipple out, he cried in terror, and beat the mother with his fists.

"What happened? What was he shouting for last night?" But the mother could not speak. She sat at the table, staring out at the trees and the sudden shadows on the tenement walls. She looked out and saw the earth stretching away to infinity, leagues of green earth weighted with nourishment. And she heard the sound of a million mouths crying to be fed.

LIGHT

to my father

My father worked with wires
that felt the turbines hum,
and reaching backwards took
spring freshets in his pliers—
lost snows, the violets numb,
drained into every brook—
he made of water light,
new task of opposite.
When weeds or wheat encyst
their hunger in his palm
and all the rains pour down
with silence to his wrist,
spring, though now a tomb,
his hands have always known—
handled and builded it
to towers bearing light.

MILLEN BRAND

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BOOKS

THE COLLECTIVE NOVEL

AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON, *by Mikhail Sholokhov. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.* $3.00.

The type of novel loosely called "epic"—the story of a time and place, rather than an individual or small group of individuals—seems foreign to Americans. There are a number of American writers, notably Dos Passos, who have vividly documented our times; but they have done this by telling the stories of persons, whose only fundamental link one to the other is the time element. There have, it is true, been attempts—a healthy number recently, I believe—to tell the story of a community, one of which, *As The Earth Turns,* made a stir a year or so ago.

As The Earth Turns tells of the life of a large farm family which is practically a community, over a period of one year. There was birth, marriage, death, love, hate, all the elements that go to make up life on a Maine farm, or, for that matter, an East Side tenement. It was a book the very simplicity of which was a slightly false simplicity, the whole book was colored by a sort of perverted sentimentality peculiar to many otherwise honest American writers; but it was an adequate book.

Then I took up *And Quiet Flows The Don,* and was shocked by the thinness of *As The Earth Turns* and its like; and it seemed to me that, although Americans have produced many good books, and some fine books, we as yet are apparently incapable of producing a novel of great breadth.

If this is so, what's the answer? Is the fact that our best canvasses show only two or three vivid figures against a hazy or neutral background due to a tradition of "rugged individualism," or to our long-advertised youthfulness (arrested development by this time if true, which it isn't) or simply to the fact that we haven't got the time? (Got to turn out a book a year or your publishers will loose interest, you won't cash in on last year's publicity, readers will forget you, your friends will start shaking heads). My vote is for the last; to face a job the finish of which must be several years away is heart-breaking to an American.

Not that *And Quiet Flows The Don* has not been equalled and perhaps surpassed in merit by American works. It is just that since *Huckleberry Finn* and Walt Whitman, in no American work I have read have I felt the sweep of our sweeping America, or even a good-sized section

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of it; and this quality is the outstanding quality of the Russian book.

You see a family, and another family, a whole village; you mak excursions into other villages; you see, in the first section, "Peace," th whole barbarous cossack country through which flows the Don, lovin fighting, plowing, gossiping, going to church and to village meetin conscripts manouvering, men climbing in bed with other men's wive rich man, poor man, beggar man, you see it as if you stood on a mountai top and looked through lenses both magnifying and penetrating upon th swarming lives of a race of people. Then, after seeing them under con ditions comparatively static, you see that race in sudden motion, throug war and on into the most radical change a generation has ever known Has any recent American done this? I suddenly remember Evely Scott's, *The Wave,* an ambitious attempt to put the whole Civil Wa both sides, between two covers; which seemed to me only partially suc cessful, since by trying to show the whole scene from 1860 to 1865, fron New York to New Orleans, all with impartial value, there results thousand disconnected episodes in the lives of as many people in whon nothing has been done to create an interest.

Sholokhov is, I feel, wiser than Mrs. Scott. For while he, too wants to show the whole scene, he realizes it can be done only by creatin an interest in the characters that live on that scene; and that we ar capable of becoming interested in only a limited number of characters a one time. And so, although the number of people in his book seem limitless (which means he succeeds in creating his panorama) there ar really only a few major ones and a limited number of minor ones, whos lives intermingle in the understandable pattern of a novel, and who ar met again and again.

One other thing which gives to Sholokhov's story and people life and interest I find to a degree lacking in Mrs. Scott's important book: I happen to know that Mrs. Scott is a Southerner. But in reading her comprehensive account of that titanic passionate struggle, there is not a line to show in which country she was born. Are her sympathies pro-Northern or pro-Southern? Does she believe in chattel slavery or in the manner in which they were freed? There is nothing to give you the cue. The life, the breath, of the struggle, which was the two sides' passionate beliefs, are carefully deleted in favor of a dead impartiality. The account of a struggle is interesting to the layman only if he has a side. The story of the battles between the Persians and Assyrians (did they fight?) can, in detail, mean little to others than antiquarians and pedants; whereas a story of the French Revolution, the American Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the Nazi What-Is-It, has significance and therefore life for any even semi-aware person.

Don't, however, get the idea that *And Quiet Flows The Don* is propaganda such as is breaking Mr. Eastman's heart. I can imagine some people's reading the book through without knowing the writer's

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stand. For his bias appears subtly (though not intentionally so); it is there only because the life of his cause—*and the fact that his cause is a living thing—is there.* There are no heroes or villains in the book (except that all his chief characters are at times heroic and at times ferociously villainous, which seems characteristic of all figures in Russian fiction). There is no propaganda, except for the occasional stumbling and sometimes silly remarks of one character to another. (I recommend to Mr. Eastman's attention the first bit of even this "propaganda," found way on page 362, and where the Bolshevik is characterized as "Gregor's jaundiced, venomous neighbor." I recommend to the worried gentleman the following excerpt:

" ' . . . Hound! traitor!' Chornetsov (a defenseless prisoner) spat through his teeth.

"Podtielkov (the armed victor, surrounded by his troops) shook his head as if to avoid a blow. . . . Chornetsov strode towards Podtielkov . . . Only the slowly retreating Podtielkov caught what he said.

" 'Your time will come! You know that!"

" 'Well," Podtielkov hoarsely choked, fumbling for his sword hilt . . ." and cut down the unarmed man. And, Mr. Eastman, the courageous, unarmed leader was a White general, the other a Bolshevik. Have you heard anything about Sholokhov's being put in a concentration camp?)

There is no propaganda, as I say; there is only the *life* of the thing of which Sholokhov writes, and in which he obviously believes so fully and simply that it does not seem necessary to him—probably didn't occur to him—to distort the picture in the slightest, to gloss over any of the meanness and ferocity that marked on both sides the bloody civil war in the Don country with which he ends his story.

Could that possibly be said of other present-day "causes"? Could one imagine a good Nazi writer daring—or wanting—to portray a storm trooper as anything not completely noble? For were he to do that, were he for one moment to admit that his people were not of a finer breed than others, what is left him? And is not that—the fact that *life,* flowing, undistorted, exciting, is the material of the Soviet writer, whereas only a dazzlingly-clothed, putrefying body is given as material for the writer in present-day Germany—is not that the simple explanation for there being no Sholokhovs appearing in Nazidom?

The translator, Stephen Garry, has done a very fine job.

WILLIAM ROLLINS, JR.

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IN THE VANGUARD

WITH A RECKLESS PREFACE: TWO PLAYS, *by John Howard Lawson Farrar and Rinehart.* $2.50.

Just because Lawson has spurted leftward, it must not be assumed that he had previously been standing still or running in the opposite direction. During the second half of the nineteen-twenties, Lawson could be found among the advance guard of American dramatists. His first mature plays were written after the little theatre movement—which had mushroomed during the preceding decade—was commercialized by big business. In the era of "prosperity," when O'Neill was entrenching himself as the white hope of the American theatre, Lawson did not follow his predecessor to the right. He ran neck and neck with Dos Passos and other radical playwrights of his generation.

With them he stumbled leftward, looking for some way which would give the dying theatre its second wind. They sought for new methods of perceiving and portraying social reality, in the attempt to re-make the drama into a mass art. But in the dazzling days of the mid-twenties it was hard to see clear on such basic matters. Lawson blundered off the path into formalistic alleyways, as the expressionism of *Roger Bloomer*—the first of his plays to reach Broadway—attests.

Like Dos Passos, Lawson became infatuated with the idea of rejuvenating the corpse of the Broadway "art" theatre by giving it a few shots from the hypodermic needle of the popular type of Broadway theatrics. Groping for methods of re-creating a mass drama depicting the social reality of the time, they attempted to depict such reality by utilizing devices borrowed from vaudeville and musical comedy. Obviously this notion of describing the grimness of contempopary life through *vaudevillesque*—which is a deliberate method of caricaturing reality—could never be successful. Where the social material demanded the level of tragdy, we got farce. This was illustrated in *Processional,* where Lawson put the striking miners into a jazz band and paraded them across the stage.

Nor were Lawson's characters simply vaudevillian distortions of reality; they were creations of their author's idealistic mode of aesthetic perception, which attempted to grasp some inner reality behind the "surface" (material) realism of the age. This was shown in the most ambitious of his early ventures, *The International,* which attempted to deal with a whole world revolution, but turned into a hodge-podge of mysticism, anarchy, and sentimentality. Most of the other productions of the New Playwrights Theatre—the only theatre movement in the twenties that tried to get to the basic issues of contemporary society—were on about the same level of perception, which was typical of the radical petty bourgeois intellectuals of the time.

The Pure in Heart, the first play in this book, was originally con-

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ceived at the end of Lawson's New Playwright period. It may be dismissed as little more than an adaptation of some of his earlier moods to a Hollywood theme. It is handled skilfully, but it is quite empty; yet it comes closer to actuality than his earlier efforts, particularly in the opening act, which describes a domestic scene with effective realism. *The Pure in Heart* is a swift tabloid story of a flapper who breaks into Broadway and reaches the threshold of success only to run away with a young gangster and get bumped off.

The Pure in Heart seems to be totally out of place in the same volume with *Gentlewoman,* and with Lawson's "reckless preface." The first play was conceived before the beginning of the economic crisis; the second was produced at the beginning of 1934. During this interval, social forces cut deep into the consciousness of American men of letters. The change in American society, the coming to the surface of the basic class opposition, helped to clear up Lawson's blurred vision of reality. This is already apparent in *Gentlewoman,* even though it is still cluttered with Lawson's earlier aesthetic habits. At the time he wrote the play he seems to have been too much a part of the life of his characters to tear himself above their confused middle-class outlook. Nevertheless, his protagonist, Rudy Flannigan, finally breaks away from the disordered, introspective existence in which he rots. He realizes that he cannot "sail over the battle on a pink cloud pounding a typewriter," but must "enter the fight" and "take sides" with the working masses.

By the time *Gentlewoman* was produced, the New Playwrights venture had become something of a tradition. Its laurels passed on to the new working class theatre that is just beginning to approach maturity. In his "reckless preface" to these two plays ("reckless" in the sense that he as a playwright scalds the Broadway dramatic critics for their shallowness and arrogance), Lawson affirms his belief that the revolutionary theatre can be the only answer to the problem of how to revive the American drama. His recent article in the *New Theatre* magazine is even more forthright. While still absorbed in experimentation with form, he evinces a Marxian understanding of its rôle in the recreation of social reality. His statements show that Lawson has spurted ahead to retain his position among the leaders of the revolutionary theatre in America. His essay will, in all likelihood, become the preface to a new stage in his dramatic development.

ALAN CALMER

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